

**MALANKARA JACOBITE SYRIAN SUNDAY
SCHOOL ASSOCIATION**



TEXT BOOK CLASS - XI



Copy right reserved

Executive Committee, MJSSA

1. H.G. Mathews Mor Aphrem Metropolitan (President, M.J.S.S.A.)
2. Very Rev. Saju Cheruvillil Cor-Episcopa (Vice President)
3. Sri. Baby Mathara (General Secretary)
4. Dr. Jose D.Kaippallil (Secretary)
5. Sri. P.V.Alias (Secretary)
6. Sri. K.M.Thampi (Secretary)
7. Sri. M.J.Markose (Treasurer)
8. Sri. Baby Varghese



TEXT BOOK FOR CLASS XI (English)

Prepared by:
Text Book Committee, M.J.S.S.A.

MALANKARA JACOBITE SYRIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

Malankara Syrian Sunday School Association was formed in December 27,1920 at a meeting held at Piravom seminary presided over by St. Paulose Athanasios Metropolitan, known as the "Protector of the True Faith". In 1964 when peace was established in the church M.S.S.A. joined the Sunday School Association of the catholicos faction and continued functioning in the name O.S.S.A.E. But the Catholicos ordained by H.H.the Patriarch in 1964, put forward the claim of a new throne in the church contrary to the true faith and canons of the Church which resulted in the split in the Sunday Association also.

In 1973 a meeting of the Sunday school teachers held in connection with the Patriarchal day decided to reorganize the Sunday Schools which owed allegiance to the Holy Throne of Antioch and All the East. Thus Malankara Jacobite Syrian Sunday school Association was formed in the meeting held at St. Peter's Church, Ernakulam on February 20, 1974. The association byelaw was passed in the meeting held at Baker Memorial School, Kottayam on October 2,1974. The Association is governed by the byelaws amended and approved by the General Body from time to time and subsequently got registered under the Charitable Societies Act.

H.H. the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East is the Supreme Patron and H.B. the Catholicos is the patron of the Association. The "AtmaDeepam" magazine, an organ of the Association enlightens the souls as the name itself implies. There is an examination wing which controls and conducts the examination from Class I to XII including JSSLC. The JSVBS wing prepares study materials and conducts training camps for teachers for the Vacation Bible School all over India. There is a wing which conducts "Balakalolsavam" at Sunday school, District, Diocese and Association level. Another wing conducts camps for teachers and students. All these wings are functioning from

the headquarters. Thus the headquarters at Puthencruz is the nerve centre of various activities of the MJSSA.

MJ.S.S.A. has also started a charity scheme in the name "MorBaseliosPaulose II Catholicose charitable Fund" for the poor and backward.

Plus 2course was started for those who passed JSSLC. Syriac language is also taught in Sunday School classes. Several counseling centres are functioning under MJSSA. These were introduced as a Millennium Program. Spread over in 74 districts there are 600 Sunday Schools, more than 8000 teachers and 60,000 students under MJSSA. No doubt MJSSA has a very important place in the Jacobite Syrian Christian Church in India.

PREFACE

Malankara Jacobite Syrian SundaySchool Association started the plus Two course in the year 2000 as a continuing education programme. Those who passed JSSLC can join this two year course. Some exemptions are allowed to the Sunday School teachers. By revising the syllabus of Plus One course and translating the text to English, we have made one step further.

Some of the students who are pursuing higher education especially outside Kerala after JSSLC are facing forces to shift from their true faith. This happens due to the lack of knowledge in the faith of the church and of the Holy Bible and due to the continuous interference of other denominations. This was one of the motives behind revising the plus Two syllabus.

The first year program includes chapters on the importance given to the Holy Bible by the church, the formation of the Holy Bible, methodology for Bible study, tradition of the church, the Holy Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist and Value based living.

V.Rev.M.T.Kuriachan Cor-episcopa, Rev.Fr.Sleeba Geore Panackal, Rev. Fr. Greger Kollannur and Dr.Benny Varghese gave their valuable contribution in preparing this text book. Plus Two curriculum committee members Chev.Adv. Benjamin Paul, Dr. Jaimon Jacob and Sri.Eldho Issac put in good efforts. M/s. Vilas Varghese, Joby Varghese, Jikku Philip and Smt. Laila George of Bangalore Diocese have made the English translation, Mr. Geejo George and Dr. Susan Thomas Parathuvayalil helped in the correction of the Book. We take this opportunity to thank them all. Let God bless every person who contributed to make this book available to His children. We are submitting the book in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Puthencruz
3.2.2014

Baby Mathara
General Secretary

CONTENTS

	Page No:
1. THE HOLY SYRIAN CHURCH AND THE HOLY BOOK	7
2. STUDY OF THE HOLY BOOK (A RE-READING OF THE EPISTLE TO COLOSSIANS)	22
3. AMED: A STUDY OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM	32
4. INFANT BAPTISM (ACCORDING TO THE HOLY BIBLE)	64
5. HOLY EUCHARIST: THE DIVINE MYSTERY	85
6. VALUE BASED LIFE	96

Lesson 1

The Holy Syrian Church and the Holy Book

The Holy Bible is one of the most discussed books in the world. It is known as the knowledge base for Christianity. The book is translated into all the important languages of the world. In the history of mankind, God - the almighty power and creator has intervened, continues to intervene and there are predictions about His interventions in the future. The holy book depicts and is a proof of all the interventions of almighty God. Because of this, the Holy Book is studied and interpreted not only in the world's largest religion – Christianity, but also in other religions. Thus there is a special attraction for the Holy Book.

The Holy Book

The writing of the Holy Book started three thousand years ago, took one thousand years to complete and is being used for two thousand years. This is collective work of more than thousand people. (Ref: Jose Vadakkedam, *Bible – ThiruvachanathilekkuPathuChuvadukal*, Karunyan Books, Cochin, 2008, 8-9) Hence, special attention is required to study the Holy Book.

The word “Bible” originated from the Greek word “*Biblia*”. The word “*Biblia*” means “A Book”. Motivated by the Holy Spirit, God’s word is written in this book. Hence we cannot call this as a normal book. We consider this book as the Word of Lord. That is why the Syrian Church refers this book as “The Holy Bible”. St. Paul refers to the Holy Book as “The Sacred Writings” in his letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 3:15) and in 3:16 as “All Scriptures”. St. Matthew refers the Holy Book as “Scriptures” in 21:42. Jewish people refer the Holy Bible as “*KitbeHoqqodesh*”. (Ref: K Luke, *TPI Companion to the Bible* Vol. 1. TPI Bangalore 2005, 3).

I. Holy Book, the word of the Lord

As mentioned earlier the Holy Book depicts God's intervention in human history. Holy Book is the word of the Lord where God conveys his words to the human world. The media He used for this is nothing but the human beings and their language. In that sense, the Holy Book is written by God's Spirit through human beings. It is seen in the writing of St. Peter in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching...."

1. Holy Book and Jesus Christ

Our Lord, Jesus Christ emphasized the authenticity of the Holy Book many times. According to St. Matthew 5:17, it is said "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." In St. Luke 4:16-21, it is said, "He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the Synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing'."

In all these passages, we can see Lord Jesus Christ reading the Holy Book and teaching from that.

2. Holy Book and the Early Christian Church

The apostles and the early Christian church saw the Holy Book as inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Book was regularly read during the prayers in the Early Church. The writers of the New Testament used to refer and interpret many sections from the Old Testament as predictions about Jesus Christ. (Acts 7, Romans 5, Hebrew 11). For the writers of New Testament, the writings of the Old Testament are not only a prediction about Jesus Christ, but also the ultimate ruling of Lord's words. (Hebrews 1:1-14). We get the completion of God's message through Lord Jesus Christ. At the same, He is the actual message or word. (St. John 1:14, Revelation 19:13)

II. Holy Book and its divisions

The basic testimony for Christianity is the Holy Bible. As there are multiple churches ("*Sabha*") today, the number of books in the Holy Bible also varies according to each church. In the Catholic Bible, there are seventy three books (Old Testament + Apocryphal + New Testament), the Protestant Bible contains sixty six book (Old Testament + New Testament) and in the Syriac Bible there are seventy six books (Old Testament 39, Other Canonical Books 11, New Testament 27). This shows that, the Bible is compiled by each church according to their Church Canon. This means the authority of deciding the number of books in the Holy Bible is with the Church. Otherwise, we can say that it was the Church that formed first and not the Holy Bible. Hence the authority of interpreting and teaching the Holy Bible is also the Church.

The Holy Bible is broadly classified into three. They are:

- 1) Old Testament ("*Thora*" alias *Pentateuch*, "*Nevim*" alias Prophetical Books, "*Kethubim*" alias Letters, Psalms etc.),
- 2) Other Canonical Books (Apocrypha)
- 3) New Testament (Gospels, Praxis, Letters, Revelation)

These are further classified for the ease of study. For example, we can classify the gospels as synoptic gospels ("*samaveekshana*

suviseshangal” ie. Gospels with the same view) - (St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke) and the Gospel of St. John.

III. Holy Book – Language and Translations

The Holy Book was written in three main languages – Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Hence, we can see all the deficiencies and limitations of the human language in the study of the Bible. For example, the English word “Love” is referred in Hebrew as “*Rahma*”. But in Greek, multiple words are used – “*Eros*”, “*Phileo*” and “*Agape*”. The meanings of these three words are different.

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew. But many of the books were translated into Greek during the period of the Egyptian King Ptolemy (B.C 285-246). This translation is known as *Septuagint* (This is because, the book was written by seventy people). Again many parts of the book got translated to Aramaic. This is known as *Targum*(translation). There were many editions of the *Targum*. By second century A.D, the Holy Book got translated to Syriac. This is known as *Peshitto*. Many editions of *Peshitto* were brought out later. During A.D. 392-405, St. Jerome, translated the Holy Book to Latin. This is known as *Vulgate*. Today, the editions available of the original languages Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek are in the new forms.

The above mentioned was related to Old Testament. During the New Testament, the language of our Lord Jesus Christ was Aramaic. However, the New Testament was not written in Aramaic, but in Greek. This language could not capture the words, phrases and meanings of the language that Lord Jesus spoke in its whole essence. This does not mean that whatever written in the Holy Book is wrong. But, when God communicated to human in human language which has limitations, we can see these limitations of the language. Still the Holy Book does not lose the heavenly bliss and spiritual motivations.

Even though, the Holy Book was written in the early centuries of Christianity, its compilation was completed between the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. In A.D 90, it was at a council held at Jamni by the Rabbis (which means “teachers”), that the books in the “Old Testament” were finalized. From then on, each church used its own language for the Holy Book. Catholic Church used Latin, Syrian Church used Syriac, Coptic Church used Copt and the Armenians used Armenian language for this. In Kerala too, till 200 years back, the Holy Book used was in Syriac. It was only after the Protestant Reformation in Europe, that the Holy Book got translated into the vernacular (regional) languages. It was only after that more popular studies of the Holy Book started in the vernacular languages.

It was in 1811, the gospels got translated into Malayalam for the first time. Rev. Philipose Ramban of Kayamkulam did this translation from the *Peshittosyriac*. In 1936, entire New Testament was translated into Malayalam by Rev. Mathan Cor-episcopa, Konatof Pampakkuda. The complete translation of the Protestant Bible was completed later and was named as “*SathyaVedapusthakam*”. The mistakes and limitations of this translation were rectified by Rev. Dr. Kurian Arch Cor-episcopa, Kaniamparambil and published the official translation of the *Peshitto* Bible (from Syriac to Malayalam) in 1994.

IV. The Holy Book and the Holy Church

Based on the usage of the Holy Book, we can divide the Christian Churches into two. The first group considers the Holy Book without reducing any of its importance along with the Church traditions. This is a big group consisting of the Syrian Orthodox Church (Jacobite Church), the Catholic Church and other Orthodox Churches (around 40). The second group considers only the Holy Book as the basis for everything (*sola scripture*). Many Protestant groups and the Pentecostal churches fall in this group.

1. The Holy Book: The Syrian Church perspective

The Syrian Orthodox Church (Jacobite) has a tradition of around 2000 years. The word Orthodox itself means “true faith”, “blessed faith” etc. (*Ortho* meaning “true”, “actual” and *Dox* meaning “Studies”, “documents” etc. in Greek). Our Church uses Syriac as the language for worship which is a dialect (another form of the language) of Aramiac language. Our Lord Jesus Christ, His disciples and St. Mary spoke in the Aramiac language. The gospel was proclaimed in the world for the first time in this language. As a result of this, the best adaptation of words of our Lord was attained in the Syrian Church. This distinguishes the Syrian Church from the other Churches.

The Churches grows through traditions. As we know human beings preceded languages. Languages were formed through speech. The ancient man used symbols, gestures, signs etc. for communication. The scripts were evolved centuries after that. When we compare the Holy Book with the history of the world, we can say that, the written language was in its initial stage approximately during the time of Moses (B.C. 1500 ?). But we also know that, Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob who lived before that had very intimate personal relationship with God. Perhaps, our forefathers experienced the divine presence better than the current generations. They passed on their experiences to the next generations through words (oral traditions) rather than through writing.

Early Church also unveiled its messages through oral communications, not by writings. Our Lord Jesus Christ has not written even a single book. He always communicated to the world through his preaching. The apostles also continued the same example. The writing of books of the New Testament was completed only during A.D. 95-100. It was only 60 years after the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (in A.D. 27-28.), that the New Testament took shape. The Church existed during all these 60 years through the oral traditions. These truths are referred as

“traditions” by the Church. St. Luke starts his gospel by referring to these traditions and says that he is writing the gospel based on these traditions (St. Luke 1:1-3).

These traditions which, were formed before the compilation of the Holy Book, were classified into two. 1) Oral traditions, otherwise the tradition that the church received from the Apostles and the forefathers through their blessings. 2) Written traditions – the Holy Book, the Holy Eucharist Prayer Book (*Thaksa*), the Apostolic Epistles (Eg. Epistle of St. Clement, the seven epistles of St. Ignatius), *fenqito*etc. It is not just the Holy Book but these truths which propagated as oral and written traditions also form the bases of our Church.

2. Importance of the Holy Book in Syrian Church

The basis of Syrian Church is on its traditions. The place of the Holy Book is first and foremost amongst these traditions. Prime importance is given to the Holy Book in the Church liturgy. There is not even one single Holy Sacrament, which does not have a reading from the Holy Book. All the liturgical worships, prayers and sacraments are codified based on the Holy Book.

Readings from the Old Testament, the epistles of Apostles and the Gospels are integral part of all the Holy Sacraments. The Church considers the Old Testament as the shadow of the New Testament. That is why there are readings from both of them. All the important prayers and the songs used in the Holy liturgy and the Holy Sacraments are taken from the Holy Book.

Examples:

Kyomto

Morning

– *Mahimayoda*... (1 Cor. 15:20-22)

– *Shemavonum* ... (St. John. 20:3)

– *Aazhchayilaadya* ... (Ephe. 2:7, Colo 3:1)

Third Hour

– *UdayonNaatha* ... (St. Matthew 28:5-7)

– *OnnamNaalam...* (1 Cor. 15:20-23)

Sixth Hour – *KaadeesanmarJeevannum ...* (1 Cor. 2:9)

Holy Eucharist – *Velivuniranjo...* (Psalms 104:2)

– *Velivinthattil ...* (Eph. 2:10)

– *HabelinKunjaadum...* (Hebr. 11:4-10)

– *PauloseSleehah ...* (Galatians. 1:5-9)

– *YejamaanVarum...* (St. Luke. 12:37)

– *NibiyanmaarumJaathi...* (St. Matthew 10:40)

– Blessing given by priest...(St. Matthew 5:23-24,
St. John 13:34, 2 Cor. 13:13, 1 Cor. 16:20)

- Establishment of Holy Eucharist ...
(1 Cor.11:24, St. Luke 22:19)

In short, all the prayers and songs that are used in the liturgical worship and prayers are taken from the Holy Book.

V. Need for the study of the Holy Book

We are living in a generation (time) that reads the Holy Book with rational thinking. There is also a group that focuses on studying the Bible according to the world of science. There are also certain groups which are trying to establish that the worships and faiths of the earlier churches are wrong quoting certain sentences from the Holy Book. The younger generation of our Church is growing in the midst of all these groups. There are certain pitfalls, in the way the verses from the Holy Book are interpreted here that could mislead the faithful. The only way to overcome this is to learn the Holy Book in the right way.

1. Why was the Holy Book written?

This book was not written with the intention of answering all the questions that could arise because of the multiple factions created in Christianity after 2000 years. The only intention of the writers were to record the heavenly bliss and experiences they experienced during their time. In other words, the gospels were

spread around the world through the Apostles who saw, heard and experienced our Lord Jesus Christ. They travelled all around the world rather than staying at a single place. During this time, many doubts arose in the minds of newly converted Christians (faithful) and there were no means to clarify them. So they started asking their doubts to the Apostles. But many of the Apostles were either at distant places or in jail. They clarified the doubts of the faithful through epistles (letters). Many of the epistles in the Holy Book are these types of letters. When we read each of these, the author clearly depicts in the beginning as to why this letter was written. (St. Luke 1:1-4, 1 Cor. 1:10-14, Galatians 1: 6-9, Jacob 1:2, 1 John 1:4 etc).

The above statements indicate that only when religious crisis occurred in certain areas or when doubts arose, the Apostles used to write epistles to them. The early Christians did not have very clear information or history about Jesus Christ. Hence they kept on asking the biography of Jesus Christ. The reply for this is the gospels. (Holy *Evengelyon*)

All these reveal that the Holy Book was not written for any arguments or war cries. But it was written for loving and understanding Jesus Christ more thereby attaining the holy bliss and was also for ensuring that the faithful stay within the true faith.

If the background of the New Testament was the above, it was not different in the case of the Old Testament. This book was written for remembering how God intervened in a generation who were nomads and for conveying the same to the future generation. The primary aim of this also is to help humans understand the love and salvation of God. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

2. How was the Holy Book written?

According to modern science, the written language evolved around 3000-2000 BC. This means that all the ancient books of

the Old Testament might have been written during the period of Moses (1526 BC – 1406 BC?) or around that time. So it is clear that the traditions of the period from Adam existed orally and was added later. But the theologians prove that the books were written many years after Moses.

Usually when the communication (oral dictation) passes from one person to other, it might lose its clarity. The entire context or content could also change completely. If it is so, it is quite natural that there could be such ambiguities in the sacred writings which were formed in thousands of years. It is here that the traditional documents that helped build the Bible play an important role. Even if the same object is seen by two persons, the way they interpret and understand it may be different. For example, if you fill half a glass of water, you can interpret in two ways – a glass half-filled or a glass half-empty. Both these statements are correct. Similarly, one and the same subject may be explained in many different ways. There are four traditions involved in the creation of the Holy Book (only for the *Pentateuch*). They are 1) *Jahwist* 2) *Elohist* 3) *Deuteronomist* 4) Priestly source (In short they are called JEDP traditions).

St. Luke in his writings (1:1-4), explains about the formation of the New Testament. “Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”

In the above passage, St. Luke mentions that even though many people have written about the life of Jesus Christ, his writing is based on further study. This means that he has studied all the required facts but has written only what was required for the

group of faithful at that time. In other words, St. Luke is saying that he has not written all the things which Jesus Christ did and taught, but has written only what he felt were required. This is what is mentioned in the introduction itself.

3. Whether the Holy Book is complete?

From the above study, it can be seen that St. Luke states that he has not recorded all the acts of Jesus Christ. But St. John clearly states this. “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.” (St. John 21:25). This means, the entire salvific act of Jesus Christ is not recorded in the book, but they wrote just the things that are necessary for the salvation. Hence we can say the Holy Book is not complete in terms of all the statements and acts of Jesus Christ, but it fully covers the messages for salvation.

Reference for further readings: Acts 1:3, St. Luke 10:38, St. John 20:30-31, 4:40-41.

In all these cases, the writers themselves state that, they are not writing all the words and deeds of Jesus Christ.

4. Limitations of language in the Holy Book

In the New Testament which contains the Salvific Acts of Jesus Christ, we can see a lot of limitations of the language. As mentioned earlier, there are lots of limitations in translating the Aramaic language (language in which Jesus Christ spoke) to Greek (the language in which the New Testament was written). The same problem arose when the Holy Book was later translated into English and Malayalam. For example, in St. Matthew 5:3-11, all the sentences start with the Greek word “*makarioi*”. This is translated to English as “Blessed”. In Malayalam, this is translated as “*Anugraheethar*”, “*Bhaagyavaanmar*” etc. But, there is no corresponding word either in English or in Malayalam that gives the correct meaning of the Greek word “*makarioi*”.

God's description in Psalms 18:8 is as follows: "Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it."

With the above description, God is like a dragon from whom smoke and fire comes from the nose and mouth. But is the God of the psalmist a dragon? No, but why did he write like that? There were not enough words in the language to describe the greatness and the almighty power of God. Again in St. Mark 9:3, there is a description about Jesus Christ's clothes. "His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them". St. Mark adds the adjective "whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them" because; there are no words in the language to describe the brightness. (see III)

5. Local culture and geography in the Holy Book

Many wars are recorded in the Old Testament. After these wars, many innocent people were killed. The Holy Book states that all these are the orders from God. (e.g.: Joshua 6:5, 8:24-25). But in the New Testament, Jesus Christ speaks about love, care and peace to all. These two look contradictory. It is here that the influence of the culture during the Old Testament period comes into picture. It was the custom to destroy the country completely, once they are defeated in the war. The Israelites also did the same. When the Old Testament existed as oral tradition, the earlier generation changed this as God's commandments. The writers also recorded the same way. Otherwise, can God be so cruel as mentioned in the Book? All these should be studied in the cultural background of that period.

In the Good Samaritan's story, there is a reference that the priest did not take care of the injured person. (St. Luke 10:30-37). Also there is an order from God; people who are going to the church (priests) should not touch the dead. Then how can we blame the priest? You can see a problem with the translation in this story. In

Malayalam version it is written as “*IrangiVaruvaanIdayaayi*”, but in the English version (NRSV), it is written as “Priest was going down that road” (St. Luke 10:31). This means coming down. Jerusalem is geographically high and Jericho is lower. When it is mentioned as coming down to Jericho, it is clear that the priest is not going to pray, but coming back after the prayer. That’s why the priest is guilty. In order to understand this, we should know the geography of the Holy Land. But just by reading the Holy Book, we cannot get all these information.

6. Different Translations / Deliberate Interferences

When the Holy Book got translated by the Protestants and Pentecostal churches, some mistakes were deliberately made by at least some people. For instance, in the translation of St. John 2:4 to Malayalam, it is written as “*Enikkumninakkumthammilenth*” (What is between us?) in the “*SathyaVedapusthakam*”. The word “*thammil*” (between) is not present in the original Greek version or in any other translations. Again in St. Luke 11:28, two words (“*alla*”, “*athre*”) were added unnecessarily. But this is not present in the original Greek version or in any other translations. In all these, there is a deliberate attempt to humiliate the culture of Syrian Church, the respect it gives to St. Mary and the Holy Sacraments. It was when there was an attempt to distort the Holy Book by certain modern groups, our Church decided to publish an official and authentic translation.

VI. Conclusion

The Church considers the Holy Book as the written form of God’s word. That is why the Church gives primary importance to the Holy Book in all its worships and holy sacraments. But the Church does not consider the Holy Book as the last word for everything. Along with the Holy Book, the traditions of the Church, teachings of the forefathers and above all the timely revelations and interpretations by the Holy Spirit form the last word for the Church.

The Church teaches that the Holy Book should be interpreted and taught in the context of the current era. For example, during the creation of Holy Book, there were no cybercrimes or not even computers. Then how can the Church fight such crimes? That means, the Holy Book should be interpreted and taught according to the period.

The Church believes and teaches that, the prime cause for the creation of the Holy Book is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Church also recognizes the human efforts for making this happen. At the same time, the Church teaches to understand the human limitations and mistakes that could arise in the formation of the Holy Book. Instead of teaching and interpreting the Holy Book in its literal meaning, the Church suggests to understand its inner meaning and to explain it through the revelations of the Holy Spirit. That does not mean that there are deficiencies in the Holy Book as such, but there are chances of imperfection in it due to the human efforts that went into its creation.

God's word spread in the world through His selected ones. It was revealed to the world, initially through the patriarchs of the Old Testament, then through the prophets and at last through His Only Begotten Son. Lord Jesus Christ was born as human to reveal God, His love and His plans. The revelation of the incarnated Word was complete and final. But it was impossible for the human wisdom and intelligence to fully understand this. However, it was preached through the Apostles, Martyrs and Saints. The Holy Spirit helped those who heard the word to absorb it. He directs the human in truth and wisdom. "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come." (St. John.16:13). It is this God Who is the Holy Spirit who explains the God's word to human.

The Holy Spirit that is given to the human through the Holy Baptism helps them to understand the Holy Book. He interprets

the word through the Church. The word (the Holy Book) that is taught in this way forms the teachings of the Church. The Church created the Holy Book with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Hence the right to teach and interpret the Holy Book also lies with the Church. Without understanding this, if someone starts to teach and interpret the Holy Book, he will not only destroy himself but others as well.

Our Church is blessed with and is nurtured by the priests and teachers who understand and teach the Holy Book scientifically with revelation of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who is the true interpreter reveals the truth through the Church. This truth frees us.

Lesson 2
Study of the Holy Book
(A re-reading of the Epistle to Colossians)

This is the second chapter included in the curriculum of Plus 1 prepared by M.J.S.S.A. In this, we will be covering the epistle written to the Colossians by Apostle St. Paul. This chapter briefly explains how a student, who has learned and understood the chapter “The Holy Syrian Church and the Holy Book”, should read, study and meditate the Holy Book. When you study the Holy Book, it is advisable that you also refer to the following books.

1. English NSRV Bible or Orthodox Study Bible
2. SathyaVedapusthakam (This will help to understand the differences that arouse during the translation in comparison to the Holy Book)
3. Interpretation of the New Testament by Rev. Dr. Kurian Arch Cor-episcopa, Kaniamparambil (The book is published by TLC, Tiruvalla)
4. The Bible Encyclopedia
5. Any other Bible Commentary

All the above mentioned resources (except the 3rd book) are available in the internet. The above mentioned books are not mandatory for the Bible Study. However, it will help to conduct the proper study.

Apart from all these, it is very important to have the heavenly blessing. It is the Holy Spirit that reveals the true wisdom to us. Hence we should open the Holy Book with prayers to the Spirit of Truth. “O God Almighty, Enlighten us to read and study the miracles contained in your Holy Book” (*Daivamenintevishudhavadhapramanathiladangiyittullaathbhuthak aaryangalekaanuvaaanumpadikkuvanumnjangaludehridayakann ukaleprakaasippikkenname...*)

1. Introduction

First we need to find out which is Colossae. In the Holy Book, Rev. Dr. Kurian Arch Cor-episcopa, Kaniamparambil provides some details about the City of Colossae in the beginning of the “Epistle to Colossians”. Also he gives a brief description about the City of Colossae. In order to find out where this city is now, we need the help of the above mentioned books.

The City of Colossae

Phrygia is one of the most ancient places in the region of Asia Minor. Colossae was a famous city in Phrygia. The people of the city claimed that they were the most ancient people. So they considered themselves as people with rich heritage. Laodicea was a city to the north of Colossae. The people of Colossae did not consider Laodicea to be of any importance. But in the book of Revelation, God refers to the Church of Laodicea giving a new dimension to the Godly selection. Ephesus (the seat of St. John) lay to the north-west of Colossae and Antioch was to the east. It was a financially rich city in the Roman Empire.

The city of Colossae is non-existent now. Today, it is the village of Honaz, which is part of the modern Turkey, where the ancient city of Colossae existed. The old city was destroyed due to an earth quake. The village of Honaz exists between the remains of the old city. We do not know if there are any Christians living in this village now. The reason for writing the above statements is to remind that many of the places where the God’s word was heard once are now places which do not know Him. We should have prayers, *lent* and worships to avoid these types of ill fates.

People: The people of Colossae were well educated and rich. St. Paul states that they were faithful Christians (1:3-6)

Religion: Before the Christianity came to Colossae, the people used to believe in three different faiths. 1) People who used to

worship stars, planets etc. and believe they can decide and influence the future of mankind. 2) People who believed in Gnosticism. They considered the human body as evil. As per them, it was not the God but the demons who created the earth. They believed that with the body, one can do only evil things. 3) Group of Jewish people. They followed and taught strict customs, circumcision etc.

Only after understanding these as a background should one study the “Epistle to Colossians”. The epistle deals in detail about various issues related to these.

Who wrote the epistle? St. Paul (1:1).

When was this written? It is believed that St. Paul wrote this in AD 60-61 while he was imprisoned in Rome.

Why was this written? In the introduction section of St. Paul’s epistle to Colossians, Rev. Dr. Kurian Arch Cor-episcopa, Kaniamparambil discusses this. Refer the above.

Chapter 1

1-2: St. Paul along with his colleague sends his greetings to the people of Colossae.

3-8: The Apostle reminds them that the word they have heard is truth. We can also see here that, the apostle writes this epistle with a clear understanding of that Church. In the sixth verse, he reminds them that the growth of the Christian church is similar across the various nations of the world, the basis for all these churches is one and the same and their growth happen in the same way. From the 7th verse (“You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant...”), it can be learned that the Apostle has not seen that church and it was established by Epaphras. St. Paul reminds that even though a Church was not established by him,

when there was a crisis in the church, it was the duty of an Apostle to resolve the same since all churches belong to God. When there were crisis in the Church, the apostles used to write the apostolic epistles/bulls. The same tradition continues even now in our Church with the Patriarch, Catholicos and the bishops sending the epistles/bulls guiding the Church. Hence we need to understand that the apostolic traditions still continues in our church.

9-14: We can see a father who prays for the faithful to get true wisdom and guidance in this part (10th verse). We pray these in our Holy Qurbano as well (in the *diptychs* or in the *tub-den*). The 12th and 13th verses remind us for what we should be praying.

“... and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves...”

In the 14th verse, St. Paul proclaims in whom our salvation is. There were people in Colossae who believed that there were other means for salvation. St. Paul is replying to such people.

15-16: The Gnostics used teach that Lord Jesus Christ was a normal creation and was one among the Angels. St. Paul gives the reply to such teachings in this section. The Apostle teaches that He is not a creation, but the creator of everything. (Remember the section *“... begotten, not made; being of the same subsistence (substance) with the Father; and by whom all things were made...”* of the Holy Creed). Here there is reference to four groups of Angels. However, there are nine groups of Angels.

17-20: There was a group during that time which used to teach that Lord Jesus Christ did not die on the Cross and His life was just a myth. Later these teachings were known to be Docetism. This was also an idea of Gnosticism. St. Paul strongly opposes this and teaches the faithful that Lord Jesus Christ was crucified and resurrected. It was by Him that God reconciled all things to

Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

21-22: St. Paul reminds briefly why Lord Jesus was crucified.

23: The teaching that Lord Jesus Christ was crucified not only for the mankind, but for all the creations, is the answer to the teaching, in the First Book 3:17, that along with mankind, all the creations were cursed.

24: St. Paul teaches to compare the sufferings that occur in our daily life to the sufferings faced by Jesus Christ and accept these sufferings happily. Hence, we should not give ear to the groups that say, “We will remove your sufferings”. Sufferings are part of the Christian life.

25: As per the *Peshitto* translation, the duty (divine ordination) of St. Paul was to serve the church but as per the *SathyaVedapusthakam* (the Holy Bible), it was preaching of the gospel. The Protestant translations showcases only the preaching of the gospel and ignores the various other activities of the church like charity work, helping each other, witness-life, strengthening of the worshiping community, healing service etc. This is because they focus only on the preaching and not on any other activity.

26-29: According to the Apostle, his main work is to preach, teach and make one understand. By stating this, he shows that these three should be the basic elements of Christian life. Out of these, preaching and teaching are relatively easy. However, make another person understand through one’s life (suffering is a part of this) is difficult. Today, it is in this realm that the churches fail.

Note:This epistle starts with a greeting like a letter. The apostle introduces his colleagues and praises the Colossian Church. He reminds them of his constant prayers for their Church and then gives a definition for Lord Jesus Christ. After explaining who He

is, what is His power and why He was crucified and stating that He truly died, the apostle describes his mission. There are 29 verses in the first chapter. He strongly points out the fact that “Christ is the head of the Church”. The apostle reminds that the Church is the continuation of Lord Jesus Christ and hence we all are part of His body.

Chapter 2

1-2: St. Paul, the Apostle states here that he has not seen the Church of Colossae. But he confirms that he is also praying for the people whom he has not even seen. (The Holy *Qurbano* is celebrated for our ancestors whom we have not seen and for all of us. Please note to the prayer said by the priest when he turns towards the people carrying the Holy Eucharist. “*Parisramichuithilsambhandichittullavarumithilsambhandikkunn avarumaayaellavarudemelum...*”). The Apostle indirectly states that if we pray for the people whom we have not even seen, it will be answered.)

3: “...in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Here, the apostle describes a heresy (wrong teaching) that had crept into the church of Colossae. He strongly opposes the Gnostics teaching that salvation is only for those who gain more wisdom than Lord Jesus Christ. By stating that the complete wisdom is in Jesus Christ, the apostle teaches that Lord Jesus Christ is the only way for salvation.

4-5: The apostle reminds us to be careful about people who would deceive us with enticing words. Even Satan deceived Eve misinterpreting God’s words. Hence the apostle cautions about the teachings of the modern cults that misinterpret the words of Lord from the Holy Book. The apostle tells them that even though he is physically away, in spirit he is with them. With this he means that whenever there is any doubt about the words of God we should not hesitate to reach out to the apostles.

6-8: Here he reiterates the importance of standing firm in the holy faith. The apostle requests the people of Colossae to stay firm in their original faith rejecting the human and worldly advices and philosophies that were prevalent in the region. Nowadays also, there are certain personnel prayer fellowships, new age movements and philosophy of relativism that influence our new generation. These people focus only on the gospel and tend to dismiss the traditions of the church. The apostle is reminding us also to stay away from such wrong teachings.

9-12: The Gnostics used to teach that Lord Jesus Christ was an illusion. By stating that He was complete and lived a human life, the apostle strongly opposes this. He also states that whoever took the baptism in Lord Jesus Christ, died with Him and were resurrected. Hence there is no need for circumcision in the body as was taught by the Jews. Those who died with Lord Jesus Christ get a new life through resurrection. (In the liturgy of baptism, this is repeatedly mentioned. Giving a new name to the child is an indication of this).

13-15: The apostle reminds once again why Lord Jesus Christ was crucified.

16-17: Those who are converted to Christians need not celebrate the festivals nor observe the fasting of Jews or gentiles. All those were shadows of Lord Jesus Christ. Now He has revealed everything. The apostle strongly says that there is no need to follow such customs of the Jews and the gentiles. (Some people were adamant during those days that in order to become a Christian, one had to be a Jew first. The apostle's argument is against this). The festivals that were alluded to, like the New Moon Celebration and the Sabbath, were of Jews and not of Christians. Some of the new generation churches (modern cults) quote these verses to teach that the feasts and the lent of the Holy church are wrong. But their teachings are not correct. During

those days, there were no procedures as we have now. All the celebrations/observations in our church today are Christ centered only. These celebrations are not of Jews but of Christians.

18-19: The Greeks used to worship angels. The Gnostics too worshiped small gods. The apostle points out that these worships are wrong. There is only one God and we need worship only Him. There are certain “Human Gods” these days as well. Some fellowships are even known in their names. We should know that all these are against God’s will. God is our head. Hence all our deeds should be according to the direction of that head.

20-23: The apostle reminds us that if we really accepted Lord Jesus Christ, then we do not need the rules of worldly purification. He wrote this when he heard about some of the restrictions like do not touch certain things, do not eat certain things etc. which the Jews were trying to impose on the Christians. It was based on the above part that our ancestors also realized certain customs and practices like untouchability, caste system etc. which prevailed in this country were all follies.

Note:In the second chapter, there are 23 verses. It is in this chapter that St. Paul mainly responds against the heresies prevailed among the Colossians. He warns the people not to be confused or carried away by wrong teachings, enticing words and materialist (worldly) philosophies. In the modern society also, such teachings and philosophies are prevalent. The apostle warns us to be careful in dealing with those groups who preach such teachings and make promises that tempt the faithful.

Chapter 3

1-9: Here the Apostle emphasizes on how to lead a true Christian life in this world. He asks the people of Colossae to transform the old life to a new person. He reminds that such a transformation should necessarily involve a change in the nature of the old

person. The change should be from within, in the spirit and the personality rather than a physical change.

10-11: In Lord Jesus Christ, there is no difference based on caste, colour, race, heritage, rich, poor, etc. All are equal.

12-17: The social awareness and approach to others of a true Christian is revealed here. The apostle reminds the people of Colossae of what is to be done for their spiritual growth. He demands to do everything in the name of God and to praise him.

18-21: He reminds about the personal duties in their various roles as wives, husbands, children and parents.

22: This sentence actually recognizes the custom of slavery. But as we learnt in the previous lesson, with the increase of human intelligence over the period and due to further revelations of the Holy Spirit, the Church now considers the practice of slavery as wrong. This is why the Church teaches that the right to teach or interpret the Holy Book is with the Church. The Holy Book should be interpreted based on the era. This is what is called the sovereignty of the church to interpret based on time. (Refer to Lesson 1, conclusion VI)

23-25: These words again remind on the various things a faithful should practice and always remember in the social life.

Note: In the third chapter, there are 25 verses. The most important points referred in this section are the things one should follow in a family life. Along with this, there is a reference to the slavery system which is not prevalent now. The apostle ends this chapter with a warning that the sinners will receive punishments as per their deeds.

Chapter 4

1: The apostle gives the advices to the masters again.

2-4: The apostle reminds that the church should pray for the apostles to have the door of God's word open to them. This verse can be interpreted as a reminder from the apostle to pray for our current apostolic fathers like the Patriarch, the Catholicos, bishops and the priests. The *diptych*(*tub-den*) in our Holy Qurbano indicates this.

5-6: Through these verses, the apostle again reminds how a faithful should speak to others. By the words "seasoned with salt", he means that the conversation of faithful should be clear, to the point, but without hurting anyone while making no compromise on their true faith.

7-15: The apostle introduces his colleagues to the church of Colossae. Of whom, Onesimus was the slave of a rich man, Philemon, who belongs to the Colossae church. It may be in the context of them that St. Paul explains in the verses 3:22 and 4:1 how the relationship between a master and a slave should be.

16-18: By instructing that this epistle should also be read in the Church of Laodicea, it is clear that there were similar problems in that church too. Both of these places were neighboring cities also. In the last verse, the apostle also informs them that he is in jail.

Note:The fourth chapter has 18 verses. The need for intercessory prayers and the responsibilities of the faithful are reminded in this chapter. Then the apostle introduces everyone who works with him. He instructs to read this letter in the Church of Laodicea also.

It is believed that, this epistle was written in Rome and St. Paul has sent this to Colossae through his colleague Tychicus.

Lesson 3

Amed: A study of the holy sacrament of Baptism

Holy Baptism is a sacrament performed in the social or community dimension of the church. We often think this is true of only the Holy Mass. Baptism needs to be performed in the context of the public and common worship of the church, as was done in the early centuries. However Baptism, today, has become a ceremony conducted by the priest in the presence of the parents and a few relatives of the child. Unfortunately, these days, Baptism is conducted after the celebration of the Holy Mass and the faithful have left the church with some other programs happening in parallel.

Today, once his/her own baptism is done with, it is possible for anyone to continue as a faithful member of the church, without participating in the Holy sacrament of Baptism. Sadly, we have lost the meaning and divine experience that comes when all the faithful participate in Holy Baptism. In the early years of the church, participation in the Holy Baptism was an opportunity for every member of the church to renew himself in the Lord. In those days, Holy baptism was held together with the commemoration of Easter. As new members were getting added to the church, all the faithful would renew memories of their own Baptism in Christ – an experience of partaking in the new life given to them by the risen Lord and Saviour. Today Baptism has become just a ceremony for being inducted as a member of the church instead of the divine spiritual experience that it truly is. We need to change this concept and truly understand the meaning and relevance of Holy baptism bringing us to the experience of being born again. If we expect to see a spiritual revival in our church, we need to understand the true meaning and observance of this holy sacrament of Baptism.

Origin of Baptism

Baptism, in Christianity, can be traced to the tradition of the Jews. Washing for sanctification was a common practice amongst Jews (Lev 8:6, 14:9). During the time of Jesus, when an individual joins the Jewish community, he needed to receive a baptism and also observe practices of circumcision and sacrifice. These individuals who joined the Jewish community through circumcision and baptism were considered as “born again”. This tradition has also been mentioned in the “Mishna”’s authored by Jewish Rabbis.

Among the Essenes (the Qumran community, who were an integral sect of the Jewish religion), baptism was practiced and regarded as a ritual to enter into the community. It is seen that they observed these rituals continually thereafter. They followed such customs because they considered themselves part of the eschatological community (concerned with the ultimate destiny of humanity or the end of time).

It is believed that St John the Baptist was part of such a community. He lived in the desert until he appeared before the Israelites. His entry was marked by an exhortation to repentance and by the baptism of those who repented. However, the baptism given by him, was different from the contemporary practice amongst the Jews, in that it would be a one-time baptism, which is not to be repeated thereafter. It may also be noted that other baptisms of those days, were taken by individuals themselves and not provided by another person. In that sense, the first baptism was, in fact, performed by St. John, the Baptist himself. His baptism was given as a preparation to the coming of the Messiah. However, Christian baptism differs from the baptism given by St John. The baptism by St John the Baptist was meant for repentance, and was a baptism ‘of the water and the spirit’, and also the path to enter the kingdom of the Messiah.

Christian baptism is established by Jesus. “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (St. Matthew 28:19,20). This is also evident in the gospel of St. Mark (St. Mark 16:15). [However, scholars agree to the fact that the concluding portion of Mark’s gospel was not part of the original text and was added later on].

Baptism was observed universally in the early church after the Pentecost. It was an inevitable custom to gain entry to the membership of the church. In the Acts of the Apostles, one can see that individuals and communities gained membership into the church through Holy Baptism (Acts 2: 38-41, 8:12-13, 16:36-38). Along with the proclamation of the good news, people were taught about Holy baptism and the spiritual essence of this sacrament. It is evident in Hebrews (Hebrews 6:2) that teachings on baptism were part of the elementary teachings of faith. During the apostolic times, we can see that baptism was usually given to the adults, however we cannot be sure that newborns and infants were not included in this.

What happens in Holy Baptism

Those who believed in the gospel accepted Jesus as their Lord and savior and were baptized. Early believers clearly understood the meaning of being baptized and had a clear realization of what happens during Holy Baptism.

1. **Being Born Again**: Our Lord, in his conversation with Nicodemus talks about the necessity of being born again. If one is not born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. How does this re-birth happen? This is explained in the next verse. Being born ‘of water and of the spirit’ is what is intended. In the original language, it also means “from on high”. Our Lord taught that the kingdom of God is a spiritual one and that those who would want to participate in this kingdom needed to be born again. It is

clear from His teachings that this state of being born again comes through Holy Baptism.

The writings of St Paul are also based on this. “He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saves us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3: 5-7). Here it becomes clear that being born again results from being baptized.

There are those who preach that being born again does not result from baptism, but from listening to the word of God, believing the same in one’s heart and proclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. Such people do not accord any importance to the ceremonial observation of baptismal rites. They regard the faith of man higher than the act of God. For them, being baptized by water is only an affirmation of what has already taken place (being born again). They also refer to this as a testimony by water. However, as is clear from the verses spoken by the Lord and also reiterated by St Paul, being born again happens through Holy Baptism and this is precisely what we ought to believe.

By water – is often interpreted by some as “by the word”. However this is not evidenced in the word of God. St John’s writings often refer to water, however he does not, even in a single instance, lend it the meaning “by the word”. When he writes “By the water and the blood” (1 John 5:6), he means the Lord’s baptism and His death on the cross. Water has to be certainly reckoned as a reference to the baptism.

Such preachers insist that those who have been saved by being born again through the word should wait for the

“birth by spirit” which follows later. They interpret “by water and by the blood” (John 3:5) as two different experiences which are two separate occurrences in time. They insist that those born again through believing the word (water) ought to wait for the new life by receiving the ordaining by the spirit (anointing of the spirit) which happens later on. Not only the Pentecostal church but other charismatic churches also accept this teaching. When we understand the original usage of “by water and by the blood” in the initial text, we realize that it refers to a sacrament where water and the spirit act together and not to two separate experiences. This indeed, is the Holy Baptism where the water acts visibly and the spirit acts invisibly. The original language of the written text is : ex (from) hudatos (water) kai (and) pneumatos (spirit). Here the preposition ex (from) is not repeated and hence we need to understand it as water and spirit acting together in one ceremony – not as two separate ceremonies. If it were two different ceremonies, the expression used would have been “ex hudatoskai ex pneumatos”.

Hence, we understand from the above that being born again happens through Holy Baptism. It was because the Holy Spirit of God moved over the waters that the creation of the universe happened. (Genesis 1:2). Similarly, because the Holy Spirit of God moves over the baptismal water, a new creation is made possible. Water and spirit act together in the new creation, just as it did in the old.

2. **Receives Remission of Sins**: In our creed, we say thus “There is only one baptism (only once) for remission of sins”. This faith has evolved from the holy writings. St Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, addresses the people gathered for the feast of Pentecost at Jerusalem “If each one of you repent and turn from your sins and receive baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will

receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38). This is also referred in the writings of St. Peter. “... and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also - not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21). When St Paul speaks of his own experience, he states that Ananias said thus “Be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name” (Acts 22: 16).

The washing by water is indicative of an internal spiritual sanctification rather than the external cleansing of the body. In the letter to Corinthians, they are reminded of how they were in the past and how they are now transformed through Holy Baptism. “And this is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). There is a similar reflection in the letter to Ephesians – “... to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:26,27). When the Apostles ask, “When through Baptism the old man who was subject to sin dies, is buried with Christ and rises as a new creation, how can he continue in sin” (Romans 6:4) , it is a reference to remission of sins.

Since all men are included in Adam’s sin, it is necessary for each one to be redeemed from it and made holy.

3. **Unity with Christ and His body, the Church:** Baptism should not be regarded as a mere individual experience. It has a social dimension too. Unity to Christ and his body, the Church, happens at the Holy Baptism. “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or

Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Corinthians 12:13). St. Paul repeatedly declares that we are united in Christ through Holy Baptism “... for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”. (Galatians 3:27,28). Through our natural birth we became the children of Adam, with the behavior of Adam, however by being born again through Baptism, we attain membership in the body of Christ. “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

St. Paul clarifies that Baptism makes possible our unity with the risen Christ. This is the great truth revealed in Romans (6:4 onwards) and Colossians (2:12). “... having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, Who raised Him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:12). It is through Baptism that we are grafted to the main stem that is Christ. Christ himself has given us the simile of the branch remaining in the vine and bearing much fruit. (St. John 15:1 onwards).

St. Paul envisions being united to Christ as being united to His Church. The expression “In Christ” is often repeated in the letters of St Paul. The entire spiritual experience of a believer is put together in this expression. All these are realized through life in the Church and through fellowship within the Church. “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:47).

4. **Baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit:** In the New Testament, it is in connection with Baptism that the gift of the Holy Spirit has been mentioned. This is clear in the speech of St Peter. “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of

your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38). We should not think of the advent of the Holy Spirit as being separate from Holy Baptism. On several occasions in the Acts of the Apostles, there are references to receiving of the Holy Spirit in/after Holy Baptism. “On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied”. (Acts 19:5, 6). In Samaria, Philip (one of the seven deacons) preached and baptized those who believed. Thereafter, Peter and John reached Samaria and by the laying upon of their hands, the believers there received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8: 14-17). It is instead of this apostolic laying of hands that Holy Myron oil, which is blessed by the Patriarch (who possesses apostolic heritage and authority) is applied on the infant being baptized.

However, we see one instance of the Holy Spirit being received before Holy Baptism. In the house of Cornelius in Caesarea, Peter preaches to the Gentiles who had gathered. While he was still speaking, we see that the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message and they started speaking in tongues (Acts 10:44-48). Thereafter, we don’t see such an occurrence even once. It was a unique incident. At that time, the inclusion of Gentiles into the church was a new step and this occurred in order to strengthen the Church leadership to enable this inclusion. When we examine what happens during Holy Baptism in the context of the New Testament, we understand primarily the following:

1. One is born again
2. One receives remission of sins and sanctification
3. One gets Unification to Christ and His body, the church
4. One receives the Holy Spirit

Some of the terms used to refer the Holy Baptism make clear its quintessential meaning and theological relevance.

1. **Sacrament of Light:** Holy fathers of the church have described Holy Baptism as “Photismos” (Manahronooso) which means being made radiant with light. Hebrews 6:4, 10:32 refer to “those who have once been enlightened” as an obvious reference to receiving of Holy Baptism. In some ancient paintings, the incident of the healing of the blind man is depicted as a reference to Holy Baptism.

It is through the Holy Baptism that one is delivered from the dominion of darkness and gains entry in to the Kingdom of Light. “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Col 1:13). In the calling of St. Paul, it is said: “I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26: 18).

Mooshebarkefo (AD 813–903) who was Metropolitan of Moos, has explained at length about Holy Baptism being the sacrament of light. The darkness of ignorance and sin is removed and the light of the Triune God (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is received during Baptism. Thus we enter into the experience which our Lord promises in St. Matthew 13: 43, “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

In the preliminary prayer which is said for the person receiving Holy Baptism, there is a prayer for his inner

eyes to be enlightened to enable him to recognize the vanity of this world. In olden days, there was the practice of holding a lit lamp in one's hand after receiving Holy Baptism. This was to signify that they become the light of the world (St. Matthew 5: 14) after being unified with Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world (St. John 8: 12).

2. **Sacrament of being born again:** Holy Baptism bears similarity to the first birth. Just like a new person enters the world from the womb, a person who rises from the Baptismal water is also a new creation. “therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Cori 5: 17). Hence, we receive a new name in the Holy Baptism.
3. **Sacrament of receiving the seal:** In the concluding blessing of every Holy Mass, believers are referred to as “you who are sealed by Holy baptism”. Through Holy Baptism, every one receives the seal. In the preparatory prayers of Baptism, blessings are invoked on the believer who “has come near to receive the seal of life“. In the prayers that follow with censuring (“DhoopaPrarthana”), the believer is said to be “sealed to life so as to become an inheritor in the Lord’s house”. Thrice the sign of the cross is drawn on the forehead of the person being baptized and he/she is sealed with “Saith” and “Mooron”. Both these have their own significance.

Seal always points to ownership by the Master. It shows clearly who we belong to. Ephesians 1: 13-14 also says God has given the promised Holy Spirit who is the seal of being God’s possession. Hence during baptism, we receive the seal that we belong to God.

Rev 14: 1 also speaks of those who have received the seal of the Lamb.

Seal also indicates security and protection. This is why the prayers refer to “the servant who has come near to receive the seal of life for your protection”. St. Gregorios of Naziansus says that Holy Baptism is seen as a seal because it protects us and points to the authority over us.

4. **Sacrament of Faith**: Holy Fathers of the church also refer to baptism as a sacrament of faith. This is evident in the way that this sacrament is conducted. The first part of this sacrament has the Creed of Faith. The baptismal rites are carried out after the creed is proclaimed.

In the baptism of adults, care was taken to teach them in the faith at length, sometimes this took even 2-3 years. Following this, they were required to proclaim their faith by saying the Creed during Holy Baptism. This was primarily a proclamation of their faith in Jesus. Today, the text of the sacramental prayers declare “... faith in you, Lord Jesus and in all the teachings and godly counsel which you have entrusted through the holy prophets, apostles and fathers” this proclamation is said thrice and thereafter the Nicene Creed is proclaimed. This is a public proclamation of the faith that has been imbibed and the truths therein.

5. **Fulfillment of the Exodus**: Some holy fathers of the church (St. Ambrose) view Holy Baptism as fulfillment of the Exodus. Just like the Israelites left the slavery of the Pharaoh and journeyed to the Promised Land, through the Holy Baptism, we leave the authority of Satan and begin our journey to our

heavenly “Canaan”. St Paul refers to the crossing of the Red Sea as indicative of Baptism. They crossed the Red Sea safely and as followers of Moses, their experience in the cloud and in the sea was of a baptism (1 Cori 10:2). Like they were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, believers are baptized into Jesus through Holy Baptism.

Nevertheless, the Israelites who went across the Red Sea perished in the desert, however believers who come through the Holy Baptism i.e. those who cross from worldliness to life, and from un-holiness to holiness, do not perish - rather they are raised to eternal life.

The framework/structure of Holy Baptism

Today’s Baptismal liturgical text and framework has come through a systematic evolution, just like the text and framework of the Holy Eucharist. As there are many “taksa”s of the Holy Eucharist written by different people during different times, the conduct of Holy Baptism has also come through many texts and frameworks. One of the main ones has been authored by the Patriarch Mar Severius who is called “the crown of the Syrians and the enlightened mouth, pillar and Malphono (teacher) of the entire holy Church of God”. It is said that there is another one, attributable to Mar Baselios. However what we use today is one compiled by Bar Ebraya(Bar Hebræus), who was a gifted historian and theologian of the 13th century.

Our baptismal sacrament has primarily 4 parts: 1) Preparation 2) Baptismal rites 3) Anointing with Holy Mooron and crowning of the candidate and 4) Holy Communion. Each of these deserves detailed study.

1. **Preparation:** In earlier days, baptism was conducted in connection with the commemoration of Easter. In fact, the holy season of Great Lent took shape in the church as a preparatory time preceding Baptism. The main objective of the 40 day Lent was to prepare believers for the Holy Baptism while the entire church collectively prepared with them. Today, the Great Lent has become a preparation for Easter. However, the only connect with Holy Baptism that is retained today, is the canonical norm that Holy Baptism should not be conducted during the Great Lent (if imperative, then Baptism is permitted to be conducted till the end of the first two weeks of Great Lent). However, we have completely forgotten the reason behind this practice. During the times of the Catechumens (Learners of the faith), the preparation for Holy Baptism viz, the study of the faith, started right at the beginning of the Great Lent. (If anyone approached late for Holy Baptism, then the case was considered until the first two weeks, but not later than that.) This had to be completed and Holy Baptism was performed on the Easter Sunday. The reason why Baptism was not to be conducted during the Lent was, probably, that the Lent was the preparatory phase. However today, when there are no Catechumens or preparatory time, the relevance of this old canonical norm is lost.

- a) ***Enrolment of name:*** In the early church, the candidate who desired to be baptized was to be brought to the regional head of the church by a mediator or sponsor. This sponsor had to be the surety for the sincerity of the candidate, for purity of his intentions and his repentance. Based on this, the priest would add the candidate's name to the list of learners of the faith. This used to be done at the beginning of the Great Lent. Today, as an indicative practice, we see that in the baptismal framework, after the

Evengelyon and the “RahasyaPrarthana” (the private silent prayer) following this, the names of the candidate receiving baptism and the sponsor (or the godparent) are written in the Baptismal register. However, this is no longer followed as a practice. Instead anyone (church secretary or the sexton) writes these in the register after the sacrament. This can be considered as one of the changes that has come about in the conduct of this sacrament.

This enrolling of name is very relevant. During this time, prayers are said thus “you have called this servant by your divine calling, out of darkness and errors to discern your truth. Merciful Lord, please write his/her name in your book of life. Please include him together with all your devout servants”. It may be recalled that Rev 3: 5 speaks of names in the Book of Life.

- b) ***Status/relevance of the Mediator/Sponsor:*** The relevance of the sponsor in Holy Baptism deserves attention. The names/descriptors used to refer to the mediator sufficiently reveal the responsibilities associated with the person. These are caretaker, relative, advisor, surety, godfather/godmother. Their relevance was such even in the early days. They would bring in the candidate to the head of the church and thereafter, they took special care to teach them in the faith and to help them understand Christian values and ways of life. They were considered as people who would stand bail to ensure that the candidates do not move away from the path of life. In the years of persecution, the sponsors had to play a vital role. After the persecutions ended, when many joined the church, their role was made more manifest than ever.

The sponsor was a believer who observed the true faith and was a representative of the church. They are described as “relative” not in the sense of a blood relation, but in the

sense that he had to conduct himself with utmost sincerity and responsibility just like a close relative. Today we need to examine if the sponsors really have these qualifications and are really executing these responsibilities. In case of baptism of infants, it is the sponsor who proclaims the faith on behalf of the infant and he/she also receives the infant after baptism. The sponsor is responsible to ensure that the child is trained well in the faith of the church and given wise counsel appropriately during his/her future life as a member of the church.

In earlier days, there was the practice that the priest, the mediator and the candidate for baptism fast as a preparation to the sacrament of Baptism.

- c) ***Study of the faith:*** This is the phase wherein candidates learn the faith after their names are written in the register. This continues throughout the Great Lent. The words of wisdom given by MorCoorilos (St. Cyril) of Jerusalem to candidates on the subject reveals knowledgeable information. In the decision of the Laodicean Synod: Those receiving the Holy Baptism need to learn the faith and on Maundy Thursday, they need to declare this before the Episcopa or the priest. In today's context of baptism of infants, we need to continue the study of the faith after the Holy Baptism. Just like a mother brings up and protects her infant, the godparent needs to bring up the infant who has been born again, in the truths of our faith and associated religious teachings.
- d) ***Exorcism:*** Once the faith related counsel is completed, before Holy Baptism, exorcism of Satan is performed. In our present Baptism framework, once the naming of the candidate is done, what follows is the prayer for exorcising Satan. At the outset, the priest turns towards east and silently says a prayer. Thereafter, he turns to the candidate

and loudly declares the prayer rebuking Satan. There are two prayers that can be used as per convenience for this, one short and another more detailed.

Is this practice relevant today? People in the earlier times believed in and feared spirits. In the present day, when several superstitions have been done away with the knowledge of science, does exorcism have any significance? Psychiatry today claims that the majority of the cases believed to have been possessed by evil spirits are only mentally afflicted persons. Hence many people think that the portion dealing with exorcism should be removed from the conduct of Holy Baptism.

In the experience of the church and in the context of the Bible, there are Satanic powers of evil. Darkness is the absence of light. Just like saying that darkness is not a reality, only God and goodness are realities. Many argue that the Evil One or the Devil is not a reality. However we see the power of the evil as a reality. Satan is an individuality that defies God and fights against the Light. It is to remove the power of this Satan and to destroy the acts of the devil that the Son of God came into the world.

When a person becomes willing to accept Jesus and submit himself/herself to His divine authority, this is the occasion when the opposing force of the enemy or Satan becomes most severe. The very experience of Holy Baptism is that the person is delivered from the authority of Satan and entered in the Kingdom of Light of Jesus Christ. Hence, the exorcising of Satan needs to happen at the outset. To restore man to his rightful place, the first thing that is required is to rescue him from the authority of Satan. In the church, there were 'Maumyono's, representing deacons who were responsible for exorcising and for making the believer to proclaim the Creed of Faith.

MorCoorilos of Jerusalem says thus in his exhortations to candidates of Holy Baptism: It is good to exorcise Satan at the earliest possible. You are like unpolished gold. We desire good gold. Just as fire is required to purify and separate out good gold, exorcising Satan through the word of God is imperative to purify the spirit. Just as the goldsmith puts gold into the crucible and purifies it, the Holy Spirit of God removes the evil spirit from you and gives you the hope of eternal life.

- e) ***Renouncing Satan and Accepting Messiah:*** In the next phase, the candidate renounces Satan and accepts Messiah. MorCoorilos and MorIvanios (St. John Chrysostom) explain this in detail. The candidate stands facing the west (If an infant, his face is turned towards the west. During this declaration, the mediator holds the left hand of the infant, which symbolizes evil, with his/her left hand.) There is a specific meaning in the candidate facing the west. It is in the west that the sun sets, bringing on darkness. Darkness is reckoned as a symbol of the devil and the realm of activity of evil forces. Hence it is by turning to the residence of the Devil, i.e. the west that the candidate renounces Satan. Mar Coorilos says: “I will tell you why it is necessary to face the west. The west is the direction of darkness. And darkness is where the devil resides. His kingdom exists in darkness. When you symbolically turn to the west, you are renouncing this darkness and its powers. This is done thrice. Now that Satan has already been exorcised, the candidate is then able to renounce Satan and challenge him.

The candidate accepts and declares his acceptance of the Messiah once he renounces Satan. On this occasion, he turns to the east, which is the direction of the rising sun. The rising sun is a symbol of Christ Jesus. Hence, turning

to the east becomes meaningful. The Oriental Churches say their prayers facing the East. In the teachings of the Holy fathers, there are indications that Eden is in the direction of East and when you pray turning to this direction, Paradise is opened up for believers.

When the candidate turns to the East after renouncing Satan, it may be construed that he accepts the divine light and turns towards divine things. St Ambrose says: You stand facing East. Those who renounce Satan turn to Jesus Christ and see Him face to face.

- f) ***Declaring the Creed of Faith:*** Once the candidate declares his acceptance of the Messiah, the creed of Faith is proclaimed. Till then the candidate was learning the truths of the faith. Now he publicly declares his faith. The Nicene Creed is the recognized creed of the Universal church. This is the occasion when the candidate proclaims this creed for the first time. Some people hold the opinion that the creed should be recited in the singular at this time (e.g. I believe), instead of the plural “we believe”. However there is also the counter opinion that since this proclamation is being done together with all gathered, it is fine to proclaim the faith in the plural. In any case the candidate does declare the creed of faith. In the case of baptism of infants, the sponsor has to necessarily proclaim the creed of faith on infant’s behalf. (In most cases today, it is the sexton who proclaims this instead.)
- g) ***Drawing the sign of the cross on the forehead with “Saith”:*** Using the blessed “Saith” (olive oil), the sign of the cross is drawn on the forehead of the candidate. It is said at this time that he is sealed to eternal life through the oil of gladness so that he becomes worthy of “the acceptance of son-ship”. The expression “oil of gladness” may be specifically noted. “...therefore God, your God

,has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy” (Psalm 45: 7). Oil is the symbol of gladness. “You anoint my head with oil” (Psalm 23: 5).

Mooshebarkefo explains this anointing with oil thus: Till now the candidate was wild olive. However this symbolizes that now, he is grafted to the good olive. Thereby he is made worthy to be called “the glorious olive of the house of god”.

2. **Baptism in water:** What follows is the second part of the framework of Holy baptism. Here primarily two things happen a) Blessing of water and b) Immersion in water.
 - a) **Blessing of water:** This is seen in the framework of Holy baptism followed in all the oriental/eastern churches. In the Byzantine Orthodox tradition, the priest first censes the baptismal font. We do the same before the Holy Thronos and the Evengelyon table. It is indeed meaningful to cense the baptismal font which contains the baptismal water and enables the person to be born again. However this does not seem to have been included in the Baptism framework of the Syrian church, though it is seen that some of our churches do follow this practice.
 - b) **Water:** In the observance of all religions, water holds a place of significance. It is used in sanctification and in offerings and other rites. This was true of the Jewish tradition too. During the Feast of the Transfiguration (“Koodaraperunnal”), it was customary to draw water from the pool of Siloam and bring it into the temple with great celebration and sprinkle on the altar. During this time, they would recite thus “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12:3).

In the Christian perspective, matter is not evil, but it is the means through which God operates. Jesus revealed this during the days of his incarnation. We need to understand the incarnation of Jesus along these lines as well. He shared His divine grace through the use of various types of visible matter. From the way in which he makes mud with his saliva before asking the man who was born blind to wash in the pool of Siloam, and later in the manner in which he blesses the bread and wine and gives his disciples as His own Body and Blood, it is clear how God uses visible matter. If we understand this basic concept, we will realize the significance of water in the celebration of Holy Baptism.

Water symbolizes the universe. It denotes life. “Darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Gen 1:2). Water is also symbolic of destruction and death. The flood in the times of Noah and the drowning of Pharaoh’s men in the Red Sea indicates this. Both life and death happen during the Holy Baptism – the death of the old man and the birth of the new man. Water manifests both these experiences.

Water brings about sanctification. A cleansing happens during Baptism – not to remove bodily impurity, but to sanctify and cleanse the spirit from the dirt and impurity of sin. St John the Baptist baptized in the Jordan with this objective.

- c) ***Mixing of hot and cold water:*** In the tradition of the Syrian church, both hot and cold water are poured together into the baptismal font. This has a symbolic significance. Holy Fathers postulate that there were two streams in the River Jordan, one of which bore hot water and hence hot water was poured into the baptismal font. There is another belief that when Jesus descended into Jordan to be

baptized, the water therein became warm. One of the songs sung during the feast of Epiphany (“Danho”) prayers lends this meaning. When the Son of God came to Jordan for baptism, the water became hot even without fire or wood (The “Kukkoyo” song of the first framework.)

When the celebrant mixes the hot and cold water for baptism, he prays “May you make this baptismal water the spiritual womb and the crucible of eternity”. The baptismal water is referred to as the womb because the candidate immerses in this water and receives a new life. It is also meaningful that water is referred to as crucible. In the crucible, a new form is obtained through purification. Similarly, during Baptism, the divine power comes upon the holy water and the aforementioned graces are provided thereby.

- d) ***The Exhortation to the Holy Spirit (Epiclesis)***: In the text for blessing of water, the next is the sanctification of water by calling upon the Holy Spirit to descend on it. Just like in the Holy Eucharist, the celebrant lays his hands upon water and prays for the descent of the Holy Spirit. In the worship and adoration framework of the Oriental/Eastern churches, the prayer for descent of the Holy Spirit holds a special value. Here the prayer recited by the celebrant while blessing with laying upon of his hands makes clear the individuality and the action of the Holy Spirit. Theological thoughts brim over.

“That He is part of the Holy Trinity, is the almighty, is the Lord, is the life-giver, is the one spoken through the prophets and apostles, is the one near to every place, is omnipresent, is the one who acts out holiness as one in authority, omnipotently operates in manifold ways, is the source of godly gifts, quintessentially one who is equal to you, one who originates from you, one who takes from

your Son, and one who has equal authority with you and the Lord Jesus and to your heavenly throne.” Here one can see the integrated picture of the faith of the Syrian Orthodox church concerning the Holy Spirit.

The celebrant prays while making the sign of the Cross upon the water. Here water is described as the water of contentment, water that removes the impurities of the body and soul, and as water of re-birth. This indicates that the candidate who receives baptism through immersion in this water receives the aforementioned graces.

- e) ***Pouring of Holy Myron in the water:*** When the celebrant prays with the bottle of Holy Myron in his hands, it is in remembrance of the baptism of our Lord in the River Jordan. Following this, Holy Myron is poured into the water in the sign of the cross. Holy Myron is the symbol of the action of the Holy Spirit. Here it is mentioned that the Holy Spirit brings about two things: Renewal and Sanctification. This portion is related to the earlier prayers that were said to bring about the descent of the Holy Spirit. Following the prayer for the candidate, the ceremony of blessing the water is completed by blessing of water in the name of the Holy Trinity.
- f) ***Baptism through immersion in water (The observance):*** Several traditions exist with regard to the way Baptism is observed. In certain churches the water is merely sprinkled on the candidate. Certain others observe this by pouring the water over the candidate. However there are those who insist that immersion of the candidate in water is mandatory. Such are those who do not baptize infants, they only baptize adults.

In the tradition of the Syrian Orthodox church, water is poured over the candidate. The celebrant stands on the east

side of the baptismal font, facing the west, with his right hand on the head of the candidate and pours water on the head of the candidate with his left hand. First he pours water from the front of the candidate, later from behind the candidate, and then from his right and then from his left side. In this manner, water is poured upon the candidate from all four directions.

We mentioned earlier about those who insist that immersion in water is the right way to observe baptism. They also argue that the other ways of baptism are wrong and not in accordance with the Bible. Their justifications for this argument are: 1) In the Apostolic church baptism was done only through immersion. St Paul's exhortations about baptism were on this basis. When he says "Through baptism we were buried with him into death" (Rom 6: 4), it is a reference to the experience of being immersed under water. 2) The Greek and Syrian expressions for Baptism points to the idea of immersion. 3) All the baptisms referred to in the Acts of the Apostles were through immersion. On these justifications, we have the following to say:

- 1) When St Paul speaks of being buried with Christ (through immersion in water) in his epistle to Romans, he is also speaking of being crucified with Christ. What in the observance of baptism can be likened to being crucified? Symbolically, there should then be an observance corresponding to this too, which we do not see anywhere. So what St Paul is saying here is not how baptism should be observed, but the truth behind what happens during Baptism. The natural man dies, and a new man is resurrected. He is here revealing that the old man who was in sin dies and a new creation is brought about in Christ.
- 2) The term Baptism derives from the Greek word "Bapto" meaning immersion. The term "Mamodeeso" comes from the Syrian term "Amed" which also means immersion.

However these terms do not merely have the meaning “immersion”. All dictionaries also provide the meaning “cleansing” to these terms. St. Luke (in Luke 11: 38), uses the term Baptiso to mean washing of hand. Here there is no reference to immersion. The same term is used in St John 9: 7 to refer to washing in the pool of Siloam. While the term Baptiso does mean immersion, it does not mean “submersion” or being immersed fully. When it is mentioned “One who dips his hand in the bowl”, clearly it does not mean the one who dips his whole hand into it.

- 3) It is difficult to believe that all baptisms in the Apostolic church were through immersion. The baptism of the jailer in Philippi happened that very night, either at his home or at the prison itself (Acts 16: 33). Where can one see the convenience for baptism by immersion here? Acts 9:18 and 22: 16 speaks of St Paul’s baptism. Here what we understand is that Paul got up from his bed and immediately received baptism in that very place. Here one needs to suspect if there was really provision for immersion at that place and time. The Ethiopian eunuch’s baptism (Acts 8: 36) does not happen in a river or a lake. Philip and he came to some water as they travelled along the road and he was baptized there. It is difficult to believe that this was a baptism by immersion. Similarly it is difficult to reckon that the baptism of 3000 people in Jerusalem on the day of the Pentecost (Acts 2: 41) was by immersion.

- g) ***Prayer used during Baptising:*** The declaration made by the celebrant while pouring water over the head of the candidate is noteworthy. “In the hope of eternal life and for the remission of sins, in the most venerated name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of Life, (name of candidate) is being baptized into eternal life.

In the hope of life: The hope of life symbolizes the heavenly eternal life. Through Baptism, the candidate enters into inheritance of eternal life (kingdom of heaven). The fulfillment of this would be obtained in the future.

For the remission of sins: The basis for being baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity (Matthew 28:19) as seen in the Acts of the Apostles is that candidates were baptized in the name of Jesus. As St Paul puts it, this baptism should be viewed as being received in order to be joined to Christ or to be “clothed with Christ” (Gal 3: 27).

Being Baptised: In the tradition of western churches, it is said “I baptize (name of candidate) ...”, tending towards a sense of the “doer” or “performer”, whereas in the perspective of the eastern churches, the celebrant of Baptism is actually God and the priest is merely a servant of God, in the sense of an “instrument” as opposed to the “doer”. Regarding this, MorGeevargheese, who is known as the Metropolitan of the Arabs says: When the celebrant says that a person (name) is being baptized, he reveals in all humility that the work is not of his hands. On the contrary, the grace to carry out these mysteries has been given to him by God.

Towards the close of baptism, the priest entrusts the candidate who has received baptism to the care of the sponsor. He entrusts the candidate to the sponsor to receive him on behalf of the church, as a representative of the church and to bring him up for the church in faith and a true Christian life. The hymn recited during this time makes clear the true meaning of Baptism.

There was a custom in earlier days to invest the candidate in a new white robe or garment after baptism. This is testified by the Holy fathers. This is described as “the radiant garment of immortality and royalty”. Earlier, the candidates who received baptism wore only white garment

and their crowns and lived in celebration for a period of one week following Easter. Therefore, those days came to be known as “Hevore” days (white days). Even now, on all days of this week, the “Kyomtho” prayers or the worship text of Easter is read.

3. **Anointing with Holy Myron and wearing the crown**: Only a person who has received baptism can receive anointing of the Holy Myron. While the Holy Spirit sanctifies during baptism, the Holy Myron strengthens the candidate with the power of the Holy Spirit to fight the body, the world and Satan and emerge victorious. Hence the candidate becomes a soldier and the anointed one of Jesus Christ.

The Greek term “Myron” means “Oil”. We use perfumed oil which is made using several fragrant substances. Hudoyo Canon explains the details on how the “Myron” is made. Only the head of the Church can carry out the sacrament of sanctification of Myron.

In all eastern churches, this blessed “Myron” is intended to be used for the blessings and graces of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament testifies that after the apostles baptized the believers, the Holy Spirit was received by the believers through a separate ceremony (Acts 8:14-18, 19:6). In the Western churches, this ceremony continues as Confirmation ceremony carried out by the *Episcopo* (Bishop). In the Eastern churches, this ceremony is the anointing with “Myron” that is carried out following baptism.

In the Holy Bible there is the concept of the Holy Spirit being received through anointing. “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth” (1 John2:20). “As for you, the anointing you

received from him remains in you and you do not need anyone to teach you”(1 John2:27). We can regard this as indicating an external anointing. Also in the Old Testament, there existed the practice of anointing with oil. The kings and priests were ordained through anointing. Christian believers who have become a royal priesthood also receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit through anointing with the Holy Myron. From the fourth century onwards, we see clear instances of the anointing with Holy oil. MorCoorilos (St. Cyril of Jerusalem testifies thus: “Through anointing with oil, you become partakers of and heirs of Christ. Do not consider this as a mere anointing. Once prayed over, this holy oil no longer remains as ordinary oil but is strengthened through divinity as the gift of the Holy Spirit and of the Christ.”

Fruit of the Anointing: In the prayers recited by the celebrant during anointing with Holy Myron and in the hymns chanted by the altar-server, the graces and gifts of anointing are mentioned.

a) *A seal and a sign:*

The celebrant while holding the Holy Myron bottle in his hand, recites the prayer: “May this your servant receive in your name this holy seal and sign”.

St Paul (Ephesians 1: 13) speaks of believers being marked with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. We understood earlier that seal denotes mastership and security. A sign also has an equal significance and meaning. Regarding Christ who was baptized in the Jordan, it is written thus “On Him, God the Father has placed his seal of approval” (John 6: 27). This is the testimony that Jesus is His only begotten Son.

b) *The pure fragrance of the Messiah:*

The prayers during anointing refer to “the pure fragrance of the Messiah”. In an old writing (Canon of the Apostles), the fragrance of Jesus Christ is compared to the fragrance of the gospel. The fragrance of the gospel is one that is meant to reach out to all nations. Thus the believer who has received that fragrance, now receives the anointing with Holy Myron, so that the fragrance of the Messiah may spread out into the world through him.

c) *The fulfillment of the gifts of the Holy Spirit:*

This description is also taken from the prayers used during the anointing. Through the anointing with Holy Myron, the believer receives the fulfillment of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In baptism, he receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit as though a seed, through receiving this anointing, it grows and is strengthened. He is filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and grows into perfection. Thus, he becomes worthy to live and reign with the Messiah in accordance with His immense and rich graces.

d) *Providing promise and strength:*

Every believer is a brave soldier of Jesus Christ. He must fight the forces of evil. He receives the spiritual strength for this through the anointing with Holy Myron. The prayers of anointing state: “May he never surrender to the forces of the adversary or the army of the devil”. “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12)

Thus the strength that the Holy Spirit provides enables the believer to bravely fight evil forces without fearing them or without being defeated by them.

e) ***Inclusion in the priestly order:***

In the hymns sung during anointing “The Lord said ‘Anoint Aaron with the holy oil so that he becomes holy’, now we anoint the lamb who has received baptism with this Holy oil”. Aaron was ordained to priesthood, through anointing with oil (Exodus 29:7). Similarly this anointing is a sign of ordaining the believer who has received baptism, into the priestly community. The Christian church is referred to as “a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9, Exodus 19:6). The church indeed, is a priestly community as it is joined to Christ, who is our chief priest.

Though Israel as whole is called a royal priesthood (Exodus 19:9) and were accorded this status, only the Levites and Aaron and his sons were specially ordained to priesthood from among them. Similarly the Church, which is the new Israel, is also a royal priesthood. However, from among them, there are specially selected representatives who were ordained through laying upon of hands in the early church. But they were not referred to as ‘priests’. During the time that the New Testament was written, the Christian church had not completely separated from the Jewish community. If the term priest was used then, it could be misunderstood as referring to the then priests of the Jewish community. However in Christian writings since the 2nd century, the term ‘priest’ is clearly used.

It is clear that in the Apostolic church, there were *episcopos*, priests and deacons (Acts 20:28,6:6, 14:23, Phil 1: 1, 1 Timothy 3:8, 5:21,22,Titus 1: 5).

Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the believers receive the gifts and graces. In order to make these gifts radiant, believers need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5: 19)

Wearing of the crown:

Wearing the crown follows the anointing with Holy Myron. The notes pertaining to this say: The candidate is taken into the altar (Madbaho) for crowning. In the case of a girl/lady, the crowning is done at the entrance of the altar.

Today, wearing of the crown is rare. Instead, the priest places a piece of his robe on the head of the candidate.

In earlier days, the newly baptized candidates were lead into the church, from the baptism room adjoining the church, together with censing and lit candles. It is believed that the origin of the procession on Easter lies in this practice. Following this, the Holy Eucharist would begin.

Wearing of the crown is indeed meaningful. It is the sign of the kingship. The newly baptized believer is united to Christ the King and hence is raised to the status of kingship.

King is the symbol of strength and authority. Man was created and placed in Paradise with the strength and authority of a king. “God blessed them and said to them ‘Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground’” (Gen 1: 28). Thus, God placed man in authority over all creation. This authority was a God given one. However, man himself lost this authority, and like many other kings of our time, today, man is a king who has foregone his status. Instead of exercising authority over creation, he has become a slave of creation. Hence, God’s objective was to redeem him from his plight and restore to him his lost kingship. This was the purpose for which Christ came into this world. The author of Hebrews

records that Christ is the king who has authority over everything (Hebrews 1: 5-13). As the new Adam, he is king over everything.

This kingship which has been restored to us by Christ is given to every believer through Holy Baptism. The crown is placed on the believer's head as a sign of this. The hymns chanted during this time state thus: "The eternal crown is being placed on your head. Today you have worn the glory of the house of Adam". Yet another hymn says, "The Almighty has prepared for you a crown that kings desire". Thus, through Holy Baptism, one enters the status of royal priesthood.

4. Receiving the Holy Communion:

We know that in earlier days, the Holy Eucharist on Easter was celebrated only after completion of the sacrament of Baptism. Thus the new members of the church participated in the Holy Mass together with the existing community of believers and all of them received the Holy Communion together.

Though Holy baptism is in itself complete as a sacrament, the entry of the person into the church is fulfilled through the receiving of the Holy Communion. Holy Baptism, Holy Myron and Holy Eucharist are hence performed together. There is prayer in the framework of Holy Baptism that clearly reveals the relationship between these. In the private prayer ("Rahasyaparthana") following the reading of the Gospel (Evangelion), it is said "through the water that imparts blessings, you have provided redeeming purity, through Holy Myron anointing, divine holiness and through the receiving of the sacred Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have also provided us unity with Him."

The path to enter into the experience of eternal life is through unity with the sacred Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. “Jesus said to them ‘I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day’” (John 6:53-54). In the eastern churches, Holy Communion is given to the infants who have received Holy Baptism and the anointing with Holy Myron. However western churches do not give Holy Communion to infants. The same holds true in some of the renewal churches in Kerala. It is wrong to deny the Holy Communion to one who has become a member of the Church through Baptism (even if an infant), based on the verse mentioned earlier and also based on the theological perspective regarding the membership of the church. It is through the receiving of Holy Communion that one imbibes the life of Jesus Christ and gains full membership into His body, the church.

It may be said that all the sacraments of the church are fulfilled through Holy Eucharist/Communion. Thus, a person receives Holy Baptism, also in order that he becomes worthy to receive Holy Communion. Hence, we cannot justify the denial of Holy Communion to one who has received Holy Baptism.

Lesson 4

Infant Baptism (According to the holy Bible)

Holy Baptism is the first among the seven holy sacraments of the holy church. This holy sacrament was established by Jesus Christ (St. Matthew 28:18-19) and happened in abundance on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:37-39). This holy sacrament is also known as “entrance sacrament” since a person is not entitled to accept the other sacraments of the church without accepting this sacrament. Holy Baptism is known as Vishudamamodeesa or vishudhasnanam in Malayalam.

There are two types of baptism prevalent among the different Christian churches. One is infant baptism and the other is baptism for the elders (after the proclamation of the faith). Majority of the Christians who are Catholics and members of other Episcopal churches including Jacobite and Orthodox churches follow infant baptism. However the Pentecostal churches and most of the new generation churches follow baptism of the elders. The Jacobite Syrian church follows infant baptism. However in some special circumstances church has allowed baptism of the elders. Generally, the children born to the faithful of church receive holy baptism as infants. But those who join the church from gentiles are given baptism after they proclaim the faith. If those who decide to join from gentiles have children and if they can confess the true faith, then they are given holy baptism. If they are very small, then they are given baptism depending on the request from their parents.

Protestant churches believe that those who are accepting baptism should themselves get down into the water and completely dip (submersion) themselves in it. The reason they give is that Jesus Christ took baptism by dipping himself in water after he was grown up. But this claim is baseless as there is no evidence in the holy Bible of Jesus Christ taking a dip for baptism. Neither the church history nor the teachings of early fathers of the church

support this. To teach something which is not mentioned in the Holy Bible or by early Christian leaders is against the law of the scripture. Let us look at what is mentioned about the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Holy Bible. We are taking the following four bibles for our reference. i. The “VishudhaGrandham”, ii. Good News Translation, iii. The NRSV Bible, and iv. The Orthodox Study Bible America. This “Orthodox Study Bible” was edited by 15 bishops, 8 priests and 18 theological scholars and published by the St. Athanasius academy of Christian theology in the year 2008. This is one of the most accepted Bible available today.

St. Matthew 3:16(13-17)

- i. “.....
aPPolYeshusnanameTTaudeneveLLathilninumkayari.
SwargamavanayeethurakapeTTu. Deivathmavupravu pole
irangi.”
- ii. “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water. Then heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and lighting on him.”
- iii. “And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him”
- iv. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water and behold the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him.

St. Mark 1:9-10

- i. “AA
nalukalilGaleliayileNazerethilninumYeshuvannuYordhanil
YohananiLinnunmamodeezaswekarichu. Than
valathilninumkayariyeudaneakashampilarnathayumAthma
vupravu pole irangiyathum than kandu.”

- ii. “Not long afterward Jesus came from Nazareth in the province of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. As soon as Jesus came up out of the water, he saw heaven opening and the Spirit coming down on him like a dove.”
- iii. “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.”
- iv. It came to pass in those days that Jesus came up from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan And immediately came up from the water. He saw the heavens parting and the spirit descending upon him like a dove.

St. Luke 3:21-22

- i. “JanamellamsnanameTTasheshamYeshuvumsnanameTTu. Than prarthichukondunilkaveswargamthurakapeTTu. ParishudhathmavupravinterupathilThantemelirangivannu.”
- ii. “After all the people had been baptized, Jesus also was baptized. While he was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit came down upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my own dear Son. I am pleased with you.”
- iii. “Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved;^[g] with you I am well pleased.”
- iv. When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized and while he prayed, the heavens were opened. And the Holy Spirit descending in bodily form like a dove upon Him.

There is nothing mentioned about the baptism of Jesus Christ in the gospel of St. John.

In the above verses or in any other reference in the bible, there is no mention about Jesus taking a dip for the baptism (Jesus coming out of water doesn't mean that Jesus took a dip).

The word “Baptism”

It was from the Greek usage “bapta”, the Greek word “baptisma” was formed. Baptism, the English word was formed out of it. The Syriac word “Mamodeeso” was formed from the Syriac usage “Amed”. Malayalam word “Mamodeesa” was formed from this Syriac word. The word “baptisma” has various meanings like “to wet”, “to dip”, “to spray” etc. So arguing that baptism should be given only through dipping is because of the lack of knowledge of the different meanings of the word. “Mamodeesa” is neither just a dip in the water nor a complete bath which cleanses one of his dirt in the body. Holy baptism has a very wide spiritual meaning.

For a person, “holy baptism” is the first sacrament which establishes a relationship between him and God. With this, one enters into or qualifies for the rest of the Godly gifts and blessings. The children of the world become spiritual children through this. With reference to St. John 1:12-13, this is also known as “Entrance Sacrament” to the Church.

“Fruits of Baptism”

Following are some of the fruits guaranteed by the holy scripture as a person receives holy Baptism.

1. Redemption from sin (Acts 2:38).
2. Receives the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, 1 Corinth 12:13).
3. Partakes in the death of Jesus Christ (Rom 6:3).
4. Gets buried with Jesus Christ (Rom 6:5).
5. Will be resurrected along with Messiah (Rom 6:5, Col 2:12).
6. Have put on the Messiah (Gal 3:27-29).
7. Receives salvation (1 Peter 3:21).
8. Receives eternal life (Titus 3:6).

9. Receives re-birth (St. John 3:3).

“Baptism through spraying or baptism through dipping”

Sometimes baptism is referred to as by “dipping” (“mukki”) in Malayalam. So at least some think that children should be baptized by submersion. As already seen this incorrect thought is because they don’t realize the wide meaning of baptism and the different meanings of its core word in Greek.

Let’s see where all the word **Dip** is used in the Holy Bible.

The feet of the priests. (Joshua 3:15)

“So when those who bore the ark had come to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the edge of the water”

Dip the hand in the plate (St. Matthew 26:23)

He answered, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.

Wash in the pond of Siloam (St. John 9:7)

Saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

In all the above cases, the Syriac word “Mamodeeso” is used to indicate dip, wash etc. None of the above references signify that they took a complete submersion. The references here do not say that the priests carrying the ark dipped their entire leg. It doesn’t say that Jude completely dipped his hand. The blind by birth also did not completely get into the water and took a dip. So, to think that baptism should happen with a complete dip in water is not correct. We should realize that the word mamodeesa also means wash or spray (thalikuka) water.

There is no reference either from the teachings of the early Christian fathers or from the Holy Bible that the baptisms which used to happen in the first century were by submersion.

Let us check the baptisms mentioned in the Holy Bible.

There are 14 instances of baptisms mentioned in the New Testament. In this 8 happened near the place where gospel messages were delivered, 4 happened inside a house and 2 happened near water.

1. St. Mark 1:4

- i. “YohannanavarkuYordhannaDHilmamodessanalkilYir unnu.
- ii. So John appeared in the desert, baptizing and preaching.^[b] “Turn away from your sins and be baptized,” he told the people, “and God will forgive your sins.”
- iii. John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
- iv. Then all the land of Judea and those from Jerusalem went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan river confessing their sins.

2. St. John 3:22

- i. EvakusheshamYeshuvumswa-shishyanmarumYehudhadeshathekkuvannu. Than avideavarodorumichuchuttisancharichusnanapeduthik onduirrunu.”
- ii. After this, Jesus and his disciples went to the province of Judea, where he spent some time with them and baptized.
- iii. After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he spent some time there with them and baptized.

iv. After this Jesus and his people came into the land of Judea and there he remained with them and baptized.

3. St. John 3:23

- i. “YohannanumSholeeminuaduthuInyonilsnanamnadhat hikonduirrunnu.”
- ii. John also was baptizing in Aenon, not far from Salim, because there was plenty of water in that place. People were going to him, and he was baptizing them.
- iii. John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim because water was abundant there; and people kept coming and were being baptized.
- iv. “Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salom”

4. Acts 2:41

- i. “Avarilchilaruthalparyathodeavantevakkuvishwasichus nanamettu. Angane a divasamekadeshammuvayiratholamalukalcherkapettu.”
- ii. Many of them believed his message and were baptized, and about three thousand people were added to the group that day.
- iii. So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.
- iv. “Then those who gladly received His words were baptized and that day about three thousand souls were added to them”.

5. Acts 8:12

- i. “DaivarajyethekurichusuvisheshichukondirunnaPhilipo sineviswasichupurushanmarumsthreekalumnamudekart havuYeshuMishihayudeNamathilsnanamettu”.
- ii. But when they believed Philip's message about the good news of the Kingdom of God and about Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.
- iii. But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the kingdom of God and the name

of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

- iv. “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ both men and women were baptized.

6. Acts 8:13

- i. “Seemonumvishwasichusnanamettu. AvandumPhiliposinoduchernuninu”.
- ii. Simon himself also believed; and after being baptized, he stayed close to Philip and was astounded when he saw the great wonders and miracles that were being performed.
- iii. Even Simon himself believed. After being baptized, he stayed constantly with Philip and was amazed when he saw the signs and great miracles that took place.
- iv. “Then Simon himself also believed and then when he was baptized he continued with Philip”

7. Acts 16:15

- i. “Ludeayumavaludekudumbammuzhuvanummamodees aettu”.
- ii. After she and the people of her house had been baptized, she invited us, “Come and stay in my house if you have decided that I am a true believer in the Lord.” And she persuaded us to go.
- iii. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.” And she prevailed upon us.
- iv. “And when Lydia and her household were baptized”

8. Acts 19:5

- i. “AvarathuketapolnamudekarthavuYeshumishihayuden amathilmamodeesayettu”f

- ii. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- iii. On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- iv. “When they heard this they were baptized in the name of Lord Jesus”

9. Acts 9:18

- i. “Shoulezhunettumamodeesaswkarichu”
- ii. At once something like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he was able to see again. He stood up and was baptized;
- iii. And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized
- iv. “... he received his sight at once and he arouse and was baptized”

10. Acts 10:48

- i. “AnanathamPathroseavarode
(Kornaleosinodumbavanakarodum)
karthavayayeshumishihayudenamathilmamodeesaelku
vananjapichu.
- ii. So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay with them for a few days.
- iii. So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days
- iv. “And Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord”

11. Acts 16:34

- i. “Ayalum (karagrihapramani)
ayaludekudumbathilullaellarummamodeesaettu”

- ii. Then he took Paul and Silas up into his house and gave them some food to eat. He and his family were filled with joy, because they now believed in God.
- iii. He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.
- iv. “And immediately he and all his family were baptized”

12. Acts 18:8

- i. “SangalayapramanniayyaChrisposumavantekudumathi lullaelavarumnamudekarthavilvishwasichu. ValareCorinthiarumvachanamkettuDaivathilvishwasic humamodeesaettu.”
- ii. Crispus, who was the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with all his family; and many other people in Corinth heard the message, believed, and were baptized.
- iii. Crispus, the official of the synagogue, became a believer in the Lord, together with all his household; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul became believers and were baptized.
- iv. “The Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on their Lord with all his household, And many of the Christians, being believed and were baptized.”

13. Acts 8:38

- i. “Avariruvarum (PhiliposumShandanum) vellathilirangi. Philiposeaashandanesnanapeduthi”
- ii. The official ordered the carriage to stop, and both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.
- iii. He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip^[i] baptized him.
- iv. “And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and he baptized him”.

14. St. Matthew 3:6

The baptism of Jesus Christ is already explained above.

In none of the baptism above, it is mentioned that the person taking baptism took a complete dip. On the day of Pentecost, three thousand people took baptism. It is difficult to make three thousand people dip in water and consider them as baptized in a day. So, it is evident that the early Christian baptisms were not used to be baptism through submersion.

Baptism after believing and Infant Baptism

Some school of thought claims that until somebody proclaims his or her faith in Christ and then take baptism, he/she will not be saved. Further they think that baptizing the infants who are not aged to do so is not correct. They justify it claiming Jesus Christ took baptism only after he was grown up and that He has taught to get baptized only after believing in Him (St. Mark 16:16)

Baptism of Jesus Christ

When Jesus got baptized and started his public ceremony, he was 30 years old. Jesus came into the world to give his life as the price for many. As per St. John 10:10-11, a good shepherd gives life for his lamb and Jesus is the good shepherd. St. John 1:29 says that Jesus Christ is the lamb of God who carries the sin of the world. As per Isaiah 53:10, this lamb of God should be sacrificed like a sin sacrifice for the sin of the world. The work of Jesus should be realized as a complete God and complete human at the same time. We should realize that Jesus Christ himself was the sacrifice, the one (priest) who performs the sacrifice and also the one who accepts the sacrifice. The baptism of Jesus Christ was the preparation for the suffering in Calvary, and the exhibition of the trinity. That happened for once and should never be repeated. What Jesus achieved in His life in the world was the complete salvation of the human beings.

After Jesus Christ was baptized, He went into the wilderness to be tested by the satan. There He fasted for forty days. Then He submitted Himself to be tested by satan and won over him. He did wonders proving that He was God. He converted the bread and wine to His body and blood and gave it to His disciples. And He ordered them to continue till the end of the world. Then He submitted Himself for crucification. He died, resurrected and ascended into the heaven. He will come again to the judge world.

How can it be justified if someone says that we should follow the baptism **alone** like Him among all these things that Jesus did. Jesus never asked his disciples to get baptized at the age of thirty like He has done.

Those who believe and get baptized will be saved St. Mark 16:16

Those who do not support infant baptism use Mark 16:16 generally to justify their argument. However, they do not use the verse completely but read it partially to justify their point. St. Mark 16:16 reads as, “The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned”. It is one who does not believe who would be considered a culprit and not the one who does not get baptized.

Added Latter

Theologians generally believe that St. Mark 16:9-20 were added later. The gospel according to St. Mark gets over in 16:8 according to RSV (Revised Standard Version) Bible published in 1952. Verses 9-20 were added like a footnote. “VishudhaGrandham” published by Syrian Orthodox church also agrees to this opinion. The New King James Version (Special Edition) published in 1983 also mentions that this portion is not present in the original hand written version. In the “SathyaVedapusthakam”, the widely used Malayalam version of bible, this part is mentioned inside a bracket. In the P.O.C bible used by the Catholic Church also, it is mentioned that this part is

not present in the original version. In the “Orthodox Study Bible” published in 2008, it is mentioned that this part was not written by St. Mark. Thus all the authorized versions of Bible claim that St. Mark 16:9-20 was not a part of the original hand written version of this gospel. So based on this part, it is unwise to claim that one will not be saved if He/She does not undertake baptism of faith. It is also to be noted that none of the other gospels – St. Matthew, St. Luke and St. John mention anything like this.

There is only one reference of the baptism – the last commandment of Jesus Christ. That is St. Matthew 28:19-20 verses. All churches used to conduct baptism based on this gospel reference. The church used to baptize first and then teach the true faith. Most of the apostolic churches still follow this methodology. The new methodology was introduced and followed only by the Pentecostal churches which started after the 19th century.

Baptism after believing is not banned

The apostolic churches which support and conduct infant baptism have not banned the baptism after believing. The gentiles who believe in Christ and decide to join the church are baptized after proclaiming their belief. All the baptisms mentioned in the New Testament are like this. However the children born to those thus baptized are given infant baptism. When a gentile decides to join the church if he/she has any infant they may be given infant baptism.

Call and Selection is done by God

Man did not select God but God selected man.

St. John 15:16 says: “You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name”.

Isaiah 49:1 says: “Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away! The Lord called me before I was born; while I was in my mother’s womb he named me.”

Galatians 1:15 states: “But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased”.

Psalms 22:9-10 says: “Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother’s breast. On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God.”

From the above quotes it is clear that the call and selection is done by God. Man answers this call by getting baptized. Through baptism a man rejects satan, accepts and receives Jesus Christ as his savior, gets sealed by the Holy Spirit and receives the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus thereby getting into union with God.

Proverbs 22:6 says: “Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray”.

The parents of Jesus got him circumcised on the 8th day, made offerings to the God in His Holy Temple, took Him to festivals thereby teaching him the various spiritual concepts.

So it is the duty of the parents to give what is righteous for their children at the earliest.

Justification of those who oppose the infant baptism

Since baptism is the union of a person with Lord Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection, an infant should not be baptized until he/she can understand and accept it.

Any person who is logical knows that this is a baseless claim. It is impossible for a person to fully understand the birth, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Lord Jesus Christ based on his ‘age factor’. That is why the eunuch of the queen of Ethiopia could not

understand anything when he was reading the book of Isaiah and had to seek the help of Philip to understand the meaning. It was because they did not understand Lord Jesus that Iscariot Jude betrayed Him, the high priest judged Him, false witnesses got up against Him and Pilate crucified Him. Is it not that King Herod and the other emperors of Rome tried to destroy the Christians because they did not understand Lord Jesus and his followers? Ananias and Sapphira were hiding and lying to St. Peter because they did not understand Lord Jesus and his disciples. None of these people were children. All of them were grown up, intelligent and powerful.

John the Baptist who was still in the womb of Elizabeth heard the greetings of Mother Mary who was carrying Lord Jesus in her womb, recognized the voice and leaped with joy. He was just 6 months in the womb when this happened.

Age is not a barrier for the Creator to know the creation and the creation to know its Creator since God is the owner of the child, its spirit inside is that of God, it is God who created it inside the womb of the mother.

At the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the three wise men saw the baby who was with the mother, offered gold, frankincense and myrrh, bowed down and worshipped because they believed that the baby would be able to accept the offering and bless them.

Everyone knows that even a one-day old child is able to recognize sound, color, heat, cold etc. That is why the infants sleep when they hear melodious songs and cry when they hear loud sound.

Circumcision was the covenant with God. God made this covenant to Abraham when he was an adult. And Abraham got circumcised when he was aged. But Isaac got circumcised when he was only 8 days old. All the children born thereafter were circumcised on the 8th day. These children were circumcised on

the 8th day because they were able and capable of receiving blessings from the promise made by God to Abraham. This was according to the God's commandment. Similarly no blessing would be missed when an infant is baptized. If baptizing the infants were against the will of God, then either Lord Jesus Christ, the apostles or the early church fathers would have said that clearly. No one has ever said anywhere that infants should not be baptized.

Witness of the Early Fathers

It is the Holy Spirit who led the church in the early days and who leads it even today.

St. John 16:13 says: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

Apostles and the early church fathers who were led by the Holy Spirit never said that infant baptism is incorrect. The Holy Scripture clearly states that from beginning infant baptism was prevalent in the church.

1. St. Irenaeus(A. D. 133-203)

St. Irenaeus was a student of St. Polycarp (St. Polýkarpos) who was in turn the student of St. John. He said, "Christ came so that everybody can be saved due to Him. All children, infants, babies, youngsters and aged who are born again, those baptized through faith" (Second letter against those who were working against the true faith – Syrian church page 58).

2. Origen (A. D. 185 – 253)

"We have received the habit (or teaching) of baptizing the infants from the Apostles because we receive the original sin by birth

itself.” Leviticus: Preaching 8, 3 (Message from the early church G. Chediath, page 294).

3. St. Cyprian (St. Kuprianos) (A. D. 210 – 258)

St. Cyprian conducted a synod along with the 66 bishops who were with him in Carthage in Africa in A. D. 253. He says that, “those who have sinned against the God early; though they have done lot of sins, since they have believed and got their sins forgiven, baptism and grace is not disallowed for them. Then small children and infants who are not matured to understand everything and have not sinned, have stained due to original sin and have participated in the sin of Adam also needs to be baptized.” This is because mamodeeso is a condition for salvation. Not only the sins due to deeds but also the original sin due to birth is forgiven due to it. So the synod decided as follows “We are not supposed to deny mamodeeso or grace of merciful God for anybody because mamodeeso is for everybody and specially more for the children (59th letter) Syrian church, page 580.

4. St. Gregory of Nyssa (A. D 335+)

St. Gregory said pointing to the baptism of Christ, “The One who was before beginning was born. Just like how a small baby comes for baptism he came a little later.” He is comparing the entry of Jesus with the baptism of infants because infant baptism was prevalent in those days itself (Research on the true faith, is infant baptism according to the scripture, A. C Pathrose, page 72).

5. Justin, the martyr (A. D 155 +)

“We are Christians since infants. Now we are 60 or 70 years old.” (Infant baptism, C.S.I priestly convention, translated by Rev. John, page 7, Research on true faith, page 72).

6. Basil, the Great (A. D 372)

St. Basil said that the son of emperor Valence who as an infant should be baptized (Church history, Theodorite (4, 19-8-10) Research on the true faith, page 72).

7. St. Ambrose (A. D 387)

St. Ambrose of Milan citing the circumcision in the Old Testament said that infants should be baptized (Jeremias 94 N 5:93) Research on the true faith, page 72.)

8. St. John Crysostum (MorIvanios with golden tongue – A. D. 344+)

“So, even if an infant has not sinned (sin due to deeds) we baptize them” (Early Christian Fathers, G. Chediath, page 254)

9. St. Jerome (A. D. 342)

“It’s a very serious sin if the Christian parents don’t bring their children for baptism” Letter to the Ledar - Infant baptism according to the scripture. (G. Chediath, page 272)

MorDionysius Barsleebi

In his Bible explanation he says, St. Mark 16:9-20 was not written by St. Mark. (Syrian church, page 587).

Nicene Synod disagreed with it.

Nicene synod has not accepted this part (St. Mark 16:9-20) as written by St. Mark.

Biblical background of Mamodeeso (Baptism)

Baptism was established by Jesus Christ.

St. Matthew 28:19-20 says: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Romans 6:4 states: “Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

According to the Syrian tradition a priest pours water three times on the head of the person who is baptized. This reminds of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We should be born again through baptism. Colossians 3:9-10 says: “Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.”

Galatians 3:27-28 says: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

Biblical background of the prayers done during Baptism

“AAnpaithengalenathanunalkin ... nadhauyarnathigambiram”
Psalms (29:1-4)

“Ninumahimayoderajakumari ... surinmakalepraNNamika”
(Psalms 45:9-11)

“Karthavuenmemeyikum...” (Psalms 23:1-3)

“Yuhanonjetti... thathanum..eksuthanum...ruhaykumsthothram”
(St. Matthew 3:13-17)

“Kakkukanathasleebayal...vanathilthathan” (St. Matthew 3:11-17)

“Nyayapramanathintepaveshanam ...” (Romans 5:20-6:4).

“Pooshukasopayalnjannirmalanagunnu ...” (Psalms 51:7).

Evangelion (Reading from the Gospel) (St. Luke 3:15-16, St. John 3:5-6).

“Daivamevellam nine kandu Peru vellathinmeethegarjichu”
(Psalms 29:3-4).

Some of the references from the Hudayokannon

From 2nd Cephalovon (Chapter), 1st Posuko (Division)

Baptism to be given again

Kuprianos : Some claim that it is not right to baptize those who come back from schism since baptism is only “one” (or once). Let them realize that it is the universal Church that baptism is only once. Those who are baptized by the schismatic are not getting baptized again, but are receiving it for the first time. Because, one cannot gain anything from those who have nothing.

The Syrian Church receives those coming from the Pentecostal churches by giving baptism again in the name of the Trinity.

Those who received the baptism of the Church should not receive it again

Jacob (Yacob) of Urha says: “When a Christian gets converted to a Muslim or gentile and returns to the Holy Church, he need not be baptized again. However, the bishop would conduct a prayer of the confessors and decide a time for him/her to stay put as a

confessor. When he/she completes such a period of time, he may receive the Holy Communion.

When a person from the Syrian Orthodox returns after his acquaintance with the schismatic, he/she is not baptized again.

From the first Cephalovon second Posuko

There should be a God Father or God Mother

Patriarch John (Yuhanon) says: “All those who get baptized should have a God Father or God Mother. Men for boys, Women for girls. One God Father or God Mother for every one getting baptized.”

From the third *Posuko*, Holy Myron should be used for baptism

John (Yuhanon) of Tella – “Baptism is always incomplete without Myron.”

Kuriako – “Applying Myron on the person getting baptized is required and justified. However in case if Myron gets over, pour from the plate of the anointed oil (abhishathailathintepathram) and it should be completed using the decided prayers.”

Conclusion

The holy infant baptism conducted in the holy Church is according to the Holy Bible and is a sacrament conducted in the Church from the early days itself. It is schismatic to decline it or getting baptized again. Mamodeeso is only one (once) and cannot be repeated. A person who is already baptized on the name of the Trinity should never be baptized again in the same name.

Lesson 5

Holy Eucharist: The Divine Mystery

Preface

Three key words appear in the philosophy of the Eastern churches regarding the Holy Eucharist: 1) Mystery–*Mysterion* 2) Participation/Communion-*Koinonia* and 3) Commemoration, Representation –*anamnesis*. All these terms are found in New Testament. These three terms can also be seen in the “*takso*” (service book) of the Holy *Qurbono*, in the framework (liturgy) of the sacraments and in the writings of the Holy Fathers.

In the New Testament, the term mystery (*Roso*) is used to refer to the salvific plan for mankind, which was hidden since the beginning of ages and in the fullness of time, fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the observation of the Holy Sacraments, the church of this age remembers the salvific act that was fulfilled in and by our Lord Jesus Christ and commemorates and be partakers in it.

Establishment of the Holy Eucharist

The earliest description of the Holy Eucharist instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ is found in the epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians. “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you, do this in remembrance of me’. In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me’” (1 Cori 11:23-25). St Paul, however, was not an eye witness to the institution of the Holy *Qurbono*.

Holy *Qurbono* is sacrifice and praise (glorification)

The sacrifice of Lord Jesus Christ on the cross was not for the sins of the people who lived in those times alone but for the sins of the

entire world. The Holy *Qurbono* is the most important occasion for repentance. Holy *Qurbono* is praise (Holy Eucharist – means thanksgiving) since it is an occasion where voices of thanks and praise resonate and rise into the sanctuary of the Lord from the experience of receiving forgiveness of sins through repentance (St. Luke 15:18-20). The authors of the gospels record that our Lord took bread and wine and gave thanks (St. Matthew 26:27, St. Luke 22:19, St. Mark 14:23).

Every Holy *Qurbono* is the continuation and partaking of the sacrifice offered by our Lord in Calvary for the salvation of mankind. In Holy *Qurbono*, we receive the same experience as that of the Feast of the Passover (*Pes'ho*) and of the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Hence the Syrian church teaches that every Holy *Qurbono* is a holy sacrifice.

Holy *Qurbono* should be the priority in the life of every faithful and of the Church

The church grows in the Lord through adoration and worship. Holy *Qurbono* is the source that disseminates the entire strength of the church. During the time of Lord Jesus on this earth, people flocked to him as they were seeking his healing presence. Even today, we can meet the Lord Jesus Christ. He assures us of His presence in two places, viz., in the service done for the poor (St. Matthew 25:40) and in the Holy *Qurbono*. Here, in fact, we directly run into the very arms of our Lord. When we willingly allow our Lord Jesus to come to us, He, through the Holy *Qurbono* teaches us, feeds and satiates us, transforms us, heals us and most liberally, gives us eternal life. St. Saturninus of Alexandria, the martyr who was martyred in AD 304, during his trial, declared thus: “We cannot live without the Holy *Qurbono* on Sundays. Do you not know that the *Qurbono* will ever exist steadfastly for the Christian and the Christian for the Holy *Qurbono*?” Mother Teresa (1910-1997) says: “We must not distance our lives from Holy *Qurbono*. Something in us is destroyed when we do so. People ask us ‘Sisters, from where do you receive the joy and strength to

perform the service that you do?' *Qurbono* does not merely contain a 'receiving'. It also imbibes the satisfying of our Lord's hunger. Our Lord exhorts 'Come to me'. He also hungers, for souls".

Do we experience any longing and sorrow in our hearts when we do not participate in the Holy *Qurbono*? The disciples who went to Emmaus from Jerusalem did not recognize Lord Jesus, who walked with them. Hearing their discussion brimming with sorrow, our Lord Jesus, who was walking alongside them, asks them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him 'Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?' (St. Luke 24:13-24). Should those who miss the Holy *Qurbono* not at least experience the sadness that Cleopas experienced in his heart in not recognizing the presence of Jesus?

What happens to us when we participate in the Holy *Qurbono*?

1. The objective of all the Holy sacraments of the church and especially that of the Holy *Qurbono* is that we may have life and have it more abundantly (St. John 10:10). Through this Holy mystery i.e. the Holy *Qurbono*, we receive the Lord Jesus Christ who said "I am the bread of life" (St. John 6:35), "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (St. John 6:53) and "I am the way and the truth and the life" (St. John 14: 6)
2. When an outcaste (one who is shunned by all) approaches this Holy mystery, he receives protection of and solace from the God Almighty. When an individual who considers himself lost, participates in the Holy *Qurbono*, he meets his God (Father) who was keenly awaiting his return. The Parable of the Prodigal Son exemplifies this. (St. Luke 15:11-24)

3. 'May these holy mysteries lead to distancing us from sinful emotions/feelings and take us closer to rightful deeds' (*Anaphora* of *MorKsothos* (St. Sixtus I) in the *Takso* of the Holy *Qurbono*) "Be holy, even as I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16, Lev 19:2). Through the partaking of the Holy *Qurbono*, we are segregated by God, we are segregated for God, we are distanced from sin and are dedicated by ourselves for a holy life.
4. Stand before God with joyful countenance: (When the priest carries the Holy Eucharist in procession to the West, he uses this expression in his prayer.) The Greek term '*GaliyoosAphay*' stands for "inseparable joy of the countenance/ face". What we obtain through partaking in the Holy *Qurbono*, is actually, the worthiness to be found on Judgment Day with joyful countenance. The idea of finding favor with God and therefore having a joyful face appears in several instances in the Holy Book. "But on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast" (Gen 4:5-6). When God heard the prayers of the barren Hannah, her face became joyful again and was no longer downcast (1 Samuel 1:18). Ezra who anguished at the wrongdoing of his people did not dare to lift up his face to God because of shame and disgrace (Ezra 9:6). The face of the Psalmist is covered with shame (Psalm 69:7, 44:15). Only upright men and those who are pure in heart will see the face of God (Psalm 11:7, 17:15). The face of Moses, who remained in the presence of the Lord, becomes radiant (Exodus 34:29, 30, 35). The main part of Aaron's blessing is as follows "the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you" (Numbers 6:25, 26). Psalm 4:6 says "Many are asking 'Who can show us any good?' Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord." From all these, the relevance of the term '*GaliyoosAphay*' (joy on one's face) becomes clear.

Man is created to be before the Lord with joyful countenance. Such was the life of Adam before the original sin. The partaking in the Holy Body and Blood of our Lord obtains for us this gladness of countenance. The divine words of Lord Jesus “I will raise him up on the last day” (St. John 6:54) becomes possible for us through partaking in this Holy mystery. The lyre of the Holy Spirit, MorAphrem (St. Ephrem, the Syrian - AD 373) states thus “Through the mystery of the Passover of the Messiah, Adam and the entire mankind, re-entered the lost Paradise. He was made to reenter the Paradise after being clothed again, with his lost robe of glory. This passage to the Paradise is made possible for mankind through the life-giving holy mysteries, especially through Holy Baptism and Holy *Qurbono* that emanate from this Holy mystery of the Passover. These holy mysteries open for us the doors to the new Paradise and lead us to a new life and to glory. The faithful who enters therein receives the fruit of the tree of life (“*Sleebo*”), which is the Body of Lord Jesus Christ, as spiritual food.

5. Through partaking in the Holy Body and Blood of Lord Jesus Christ, we become part of the Body of the Lord. St. Paul is the advocate of this concept. “Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks, a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break, a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16-17). The Syriac term used to refer to participation, relation, fellowship etc. is “*Shautofooso*” which essentially means “a deep relationship of unity/oneness” or “becoming one”. Symbolically, this indicates the process of two persons becoming one body.

The bread which is offered in the Holy *Qurbono* transforms into the body of Lord Jesus Christ. Those who participate in this become one - together with each other -

in Christ. They also become one with Christ. They become one body. It is based on this that the Church is referred to as the Body of Christ in the New Testament.

6. Holy *Qurbano* is a supper with the risen Lord. On the day of Resurrection, the risen Christ appears to the two disciples who travel from Jerusalem to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13-31). Lord Jesus accompanies them as their co-traveler. Though they indulge in a lengthy conversation, they do not recognize Lord Jesus (24:16). It is only at the end of their journey when He breaks bread with them that they recognize the risen Lord. “When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him” (24:30-31). It is the participation in the holy mysteries (Holy *Qurbano*) that opened their eyes to recognize the presence of the risen Lord. We need to understand the meaning of this in the context of the Holy Communion of the early Christians. The early Christians regarded every Holy *Qurbano* as an occasion to have supper with the risen Lord. In the celebration of the Holy *Qurbano*, they recognized the living presence of Jesus Christ. The true meaning of our Lord’s words “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them” (St. Matthew 18:20) is fulfilled in the coming together of faithful for the Holy *Qurbano*. Was it not when the Lord broke bread and gave them that the two doubtful disciples realized the reality of the Resurrection? In the same manner, Holy *Qurbano* was the opportunity and occasion for the early Christians to realize the reality of the Resurrection. The words “Behold, I Stand at the door and knock. If any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me” (Rev 3:20) also refers to the Holy *Qurbano*. The early church regularly performed “breaking of the bread” or the

offering of the Holy *Qurbono* (Acts 2:42-46) as it was an experience of having supper with the Lord.

Why is Sunday set apart for offering Holy *Qurbono*?

The day of the Resurrection, Sunday, was chosen in the Christian tradition as the day of adoration and worship. Every Sunday in its truest sense, is the celebration of Easter. It was also on Sunday that the risen Lord appeared to the disciples (St. John 20:19-26, St. Luke 24:1). Early Christians believed that the risen Christ came into their midst when they gathered together on Sundays. The Acts of the Apostles bears testimony that the main objective of the coming together on Sundays was to offer the Holy *Qurbono*.

On a Sunday, when they gathered for “*Evkaristhio*” (breaking of bread), St Paul addresses the faithful. Since he intended to leave the next day, he continued to speak until midnight (Acts 20:7). What is described here is the worship that St Paul lead during his third missionary journey. The main objective for gathering together on a Sunday was the breaking of bread (Holy *Qurbono*). St Luke writes that St Paul spoke on this occasion. The early church considered the Holy *Qurbono* as the experience of eating with the risen Christ recognizing His presence. It is in this background, the Holy *Qurbono* came to be known as “Lord’s Supper”.

There is inseparable connection between Sunday and the Holy *Qurbono*. Sunday is referred to as “Lord’s Day” in Revelations authored by John. (Rev 1:10). There is connection between “Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10) and “Lord’s Supper” (1 Cor. 11:20 KJV Bible). Sunday is referred to as “Lord’s Day” because it is the day for “Lord’s Supper”.

We understood that the main intent of coming together on Sunday was “breaking of bread” (Acts 20:7). It is in accordance with this tradition that Apostolic churches have accorded prime place to

offering of the Holy *Qurbono* on Sundays and days of the Feasts (“*MoronoyoPerunaal*” - close to the Lord), the days which are meant to be observed similar to Sundays.

Which are the rites/actions fundamental to the Holy *Qurbono*?

Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave to his disciples. ‘Took’, ‘blessed’, ‘broke’ and ‘gave’ are the four quintessential rites/actions of the Holy *Qurbono*. The Lord did the same with regard to the cup/wine as well i.e. He took, blessed and gave. The Holy *Qurbono* is in fact, the expansion of these four actions. The preparatory prayers (*Thooyobo*) of the Holy *Qurbono* are the expanded form of “took”. The celebrant “takes” bread and wine and reads the same, while saying specific prayers. The action of “blessed” is done in *Anaphora* (prayers after stepping into the *Dargo*) While “breaking” happens in the service of “breaking of bread”, “giving” happens when the Holy Communion is received by the faithful. The Apostolic churches accepted prayers, rites, and symbols that were in accordance with the meaningfulness and honorability of the Holy *Qurbono*. The church institutes the framework of worship with an objective to fundamentally establish and strengthen the belief of the church, the awareness of the sacred presence of the Lord and the supreme importance of the Holy *Qurbono*.

How should we prepare ourselves for the Holy *Qurbono*?

Our Lord and his disciples (Luke 22:12) observed the Passover in an “all furnished” upper room. St Paul, on preparation for partaking in the Holy *Qurbono* and receiving the most precious Holy Communion, states: “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on him. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 11:27-30). Hence we need to prepare with utmost

devotion and reverence to receive the Holy *Qurbono*. A faithful should receive the Holy *Qurbono* only after the Holy sacrament of Penance (Holy Confession). It is incorrect to receive Holy *Qurbono* without the Holy sacrament of Penance or receiving the *Hoosoyo*. (It is to be noted that the *Hoosoyo* or prayer for remission of sins is not the same as the Holy sacrament of Penance). We need to prepare ourselves to receive the Holy *Qurbono* in all its sacredness, by saying the hourly prayers (*YaamaPrathana*) from the previous day onwards, and by duly observing fasting, alertness, minimal speech, purity of the body and meditation, while being mindful of the fact that it is my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who I am receiving into me.

The Holy Spirit descends in the Holy *Qurbono*

During the Holy *Qurbono*, the Holy Spirit descends from heaven not only upon the bread and the wine but also upon the celebrant and all the faithful. The exhortation by the deacon while the Holy Spirit is being invoked in the Holy *Qurbono* is thus: “How awful is this hour and how dreadful is this moment, my beloved, wherein the Holy Spirit from the topmost heights takes wing and descends and hovers and rests upon this Eucharist here present and sanctifies it. Be in calm and awe, while standing and praying.” We can also see this in the private prayer (*RahasyaPrarthana*) said by the priest during this time (“Have mercy upon us, O God, have mercy upon us and send down Your Holy Spirit upon these offerings and sanctify these Mysteries and may He help and absolve me.” - The *Anaphora* of St. Peter) and also in some “*Prumiyons*” and “*Sedros*” of the Holy *Qurbono*. Some examples from “*Prumiyons*” and “*Sedros*” being (a) May your most High Holy Spirit come upon us and upon this *Qurbono* that we have offered and on your people, the community of the faithful, through our Lord Jesus Christ (b) May your living Holy Spirit – the Spirit of wisdom and discernment, the spirit of knowledge and valiance, the spirit of peace and godly devotion, the spirit of salvation and acceptance through son-ship, mercifully come upon us and be pleased with us. May this your Holy Spirit descend,

fluttering down upon our souls and bodies ... (c) May the Holy Spirit descend speedily and invisibly, from the most high heavens upon this Holy *Qurbono* ...

The Holy Fathers of the Syrian church teach us that when we draw near to God through prayers, and when we receive the grace and light of God through the holy sacraments and services, then God draws near to us [eg. the Blessing of the Palm frondson Palm Sunday or the Burning of the Palm fronds(*TeejwalaSushrusha*) on the Feast of Christmas (*YeldhoPerunnal*)]. In other words, in all the Holy sacraments, there is man who “ascends” while there is God who “descends”. Hence the church accords utmost importance to the sacraments, especially to the Holy sacrament of *Qurbono*, over and above the importance given to prayers and worship services.

Liturgy after Liturgy

Our worship reaches its perfection only when we fulfill, through our day-to-day deeds, the fruits of the Holy Spirit and the strength we receive through our worship and adoration, especially from Holy *Qurbono*. ‘Liturgy’ in the Holy book and in the early church meant ‘service of the Lord’. It includes everything including loving one’s neighbour. The mentality of viewing the liturgy (worship) merely as one of the many things to be observed/ practiced and to approach it as merely a necessary duty to be carried out is fundamentally opposed to the serving of the Lord, which is its real quintessence. This service of the Lord should be inspired by the experience of deliverance which we have received as the people of God who have become one through salvation. Such a situation as described in Acts 4: 34 “There were no needy persons among them”, can come about only from the mentality of recognizing God as our Father, being His people, and through this, imbibing the brotherhood of the people of God. Both these aspects of adoration are in accordance with the holy book and also the will of Lord Jesus Christ. Sadly, these ultimately get neglected, simply because the principles of prayer do not hold

sway over faith and faith fails to influence life. The main task of MorAugen of Clisma (AD 363) was to gather the pearls from the depths of the sea and distribute them to the poor. The lives of such Holy fathers ought to be an inspiration for us all.

Lesson 6

Value Based Life

“We know how to fly in the air like a bird, how to swim like a fish in the water; but we do not know how to live like a human being”
– Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

Values encourage one to live as a perfect person.

Development of science and technology has improved the comforts of modern man reducing his difficulties. Still he is constantly seeking greater comforts. In this search for better facilities, man has got isolated. He is engulfed in loneliness and vacuum. The peace which he was searching escaped him like a mirage. Studies show that this isolation started at home. The relationship between parents and children are broken. They live more like strangers. Thus the relationships which were intended to nurture a person became bondages. In these circumstances, it is imperative to build a generation with values.

What do we mean by values? Values are closely connected with the larger objectives of life. To achieve these objectives, certain codes were set up by man to guide him through an acceptable way of life. These codes are known as values. Values are those that can be considered valuable. Values represent the principles that a man lives for. These are integral part of the vision of any society. A value based life is inevitable for the complete growth – physical, mental, social and spiritual – of a person.

Values are inextricably tied with the objectives of education. Only what is of value are passed on from one generation to another. The essence of the idea behind education is values.

Values are what a generation feels important enough to be taught and transferred to the next generation. People think that the social guiding principles and beliefs, which are the main components of

a culture, to be valuable. These principles considered to be invaluable by them are considered as values. Values include all important teachings of the faith and religion, righteous attitude and objectives of life. They not only maintain the society and its culture but also bring the necessary changes in them. In short, values are the ideal thinking styles and work styles that bring about personal and social growth and welfare.

Classification of Values

Based on the character, values are classified as follows:

1. Organic values (desire)
2. Inner values
3. Beneficial values.

1. Organic Values

The thought that “whatever you desire is good for you” can be termed Organic. These values give a child complete freedom and permission to select whatever it wants. We all like to have freedom. But we should remember that all freedoms may not be good for us.

2. Inner Values

Inner values reflect the principles on which a person’s life is based. The fundamental inner values are truth, inner beauty and goodness. These values are expressed according to each one’s consciousness irrespective on the fact whether another person likes it or not.

3. Beneficial Values

Beneficial theory is the basis for these values. These values are measured on the basis of experience. They are dependent on the immediate or far reaching consequences of an action. Life experiences form the basis for these values.

What do you mean by conflict of Values?

Technological growth and desire for material benefits have caused a dent in the values that were passed on to us for generations. When education, today, is considered as only a stepping stone to

get a good job and thus for achieving a high standard of living, even parents are not imparting values to their children. Even in the educational syllabi, there is no more than casual reference on values. No earnest efforts are taken to motivate the children to imbibe acceptable moral and social values. All these contribute to conflict of values.

Factors that encourage conflict of values

1. Influence of western views

By the influx of western lifestyle many people consider our traditional values as old and unsuitable to the present times. According to them, these values do not help anyone to achieve their material goals. Education has been downgraded as a means just for economic growth. As a result the values of the new generation are eroded.

2. Explosive growth of scientific knowledge

The swift developments in the fields of science and technology have started questioning the value base of human life. Science that perceives every subject through experiments and observations conveniently forgets the spiritual side of man.

3. Fast growth of industrialization and urbanization.

Even though industrialization and growth of cities have led to the economic security of the country, it has also led to an attitude of commercialization in all aspects of life. This commercial attitude has even invaded into the relationships and sanctity of family life.

4. Social discomfort

Social inequality, ideological clashes in the society, political uncertainty, religious leaders who aim at short-term benefits and distortions in social and cultural

organizations have sown the seed of value erosion in the minds of the young.

5. Influence of consumerism

Materialistic view of life has seriously influenced human attitudes. “What benefit will I have from this?” has become the guiding principle behind every activity. People are ruled by the Hedonic Principle “eat, drink and be merry”. This thought process also is a reason for the present deterioration of values.

6. Shortcomings in the syllabus and mode of teaching

The present syllabi in schools cannot be considered as value based. So also, the teachers are not trained on how to impart good values to students. A curriculum which does not promote the acquisition of values cannot be expected to bring up a generation with good values.

Education and Values

Education is the most important tool for the transformation of a person. Education is expected to impart the ideologies of socialism, secularism and morality in a person. Since we are social beings, we should imbibe the values of tolerance, co-operation, ability to accept the views of others and mutual respect. Moral values include honesty, trustworthiness, moral stability, good conduct and appropriate behavior. Through education, we should also imbibe sense of discipline, social awareness, social justice, conviction to respond to social evils, sense of sacrifice etc.

Values are imbibed and not taught

An individual learns his first lesson of socialization from the mother’s kiss and father’s care. A good family atmosphere is absolutely necessary for the growth of a generation with good values. Therefore every Christian parent should give attention to lead a prayerful and God fearing family life.

Let us see a few challenges faced by a Christian family.

1. Not listening to God's call

The book of Genesis depicts a man, who was created above all other creatures, hiding behind the bushes when God calls him by his name to see his state. It is interesting to note the reply of Adam. It is mentioned that Adam was hiding from God. We should also introspect whether we too are hiding when God calls us.

2. Not heeding to the calls of our brethren

Amidst our busy schedule, we have time only to worry about ourselves. We do not have time for our fellow beings. In Holy Bible, we read about Andrews who brings his brother to Jesus after experiencing "Jesus" for himself. This is a clear model for us to emulate. We should know that it is our duty to lead our brothers to God rather than leaving them behind.

If we cannot see our brother who is close by, we cannot see the invisible God.

3. Homes are not built

A great challenge that Christian families face today is that their homes are not built. "If God does not build homes, our efforts are futile; If God does not protect the town, the vigil by the security is futile." If our houses are to be transformed into Christian homes, they have to be built by God. If the sanctity, sacredness, peace, order and tranquility of homes are lost, then the parents should give utmost importance to restore the same.

4. Over influence of media

We are living in a time which is highly influenced by the media. We should not forget that media has a major share in misleading today's youth. Though technologies like

internet, mobile phones and other modern means have improved our comfort, there are lots of options for people to be misguided by these same means. We do not realize that the mushrooming channels on television do not give any importance to moral values.

5. Marriage – a means for showoff

Marriage is the sacrament through which God unites a man with woman. St. Matthew 19:6 says, “So they are no longer two, but one. Man must not separate then what God has joined together.” But today marriage ceremony has become a pageantry to show off. Christians should approach marriage ceremony understanding the sanctity of God’s calling. Marriage being the first step to family life, everybody should approach marriage life with care, preparation and prayer.

Today, a kind of “fencing” is very important to prevent the youth from going astray. What is the need of this fencing? We need to build a fence against the following.

- The lustful attractions of the world
- The attitude that money can buy anything and everything
- Alcohol and drugs
- Unhealthy friendships
- Abusing God
- Harming the fellow beings.
- Worldly or Carnal pleasures
- Corruption and Partiality
- Using spirituality for material benefits.

List of moral values

NCERT (National Council of Education Research and Training – established in 1960) has prepared a list of values that every

secondary school child should imbibe in his/her life (Documents on Social, Moral and Spiritual Values in Education – 1976).

1. Overcome the lust which comes through various senses
(*Indriyanigraham*)
2. Respect for the cultural values of others
3. Oppose untouchability
4. Self awareness of the roles and responsibilities of a citizen
5. Consideration for others
6. Anxiety about others well being
7. Co-operation
8. Cleanliness
9. Compassion
10. Awareness of social roles and responsibilities
11. Attitude to help and improve the society
12. Courage
13. Maintain the decorum, social code of conduct, nobility, dignity, correctitude and chivalry.(*Maryada*)
14. Curiosity
15. Understanding the common good
(*Janayathaparamayatheerpukalpikal*)
16. Religious belief
17. Maintaining dignity
18. Sense of responsibility
19. Humility
20. Perseverance or ability to tolerate
21. Ability to treat everybody as equal or Sense of equality
22. Friendship
23. Faithfulness
24. Vision of equality
25. Good manners
26. Maintain the socially acceptable behavior (*Manyatha*)
27. Gratitude
28. Truth
29. Helping mentality
30. Sense of justice
31. Compassion to animals

32. Obedience
33. Peace
34. Punctuality
35. Sincerity (*athmarthatha*)
36. Respect for elders
37. Simplicity
38. Self confidence
39. Self control
40. Sense of right and wrong
41. Group consciousness (*sangabodham*)
42. Sense of maintaining the social properties
(List is incomplete)

We can understand from this list that all qualities required to be a good citizen are included in values.

The five basic values

Our forefathers have put forth five basic values that are a must for a person to be righteous in the journey of life filled trials and tribulations. Adhering to these values will prevent us from falling into the traps of this world and thereby deteriorating into personalities useless for ourselves and the society. These values are – truth, righteousness, non-violence, love and peace.

1. Truth

Truth is upheld as the most important value by all religions and philosophies. Searching for truth should be the ultimate aim of one's life. We should have the courage to hold high the value of truth in times of conflicts. The Indian culture teaches "*SatyamevaJayathe*" which means "Truth Alone Triumphs". There could be temporary gains and victories when someone lives untruthfully. But what is gained through truthful ways only will remain with us forever. To live truthfully, we should do away with telling

lies and hiding facts. A Christian should never forget the experience of Ananias and Sapphira who lied to St. Peter.

2. Righteous life (*dharmikavyavaharam*)

Indian philosophy gives great importance to a life based on “*Dharma*” or righteousness. When there is a conflict between righteousness and unrighteousness (*dharm* and *adharma*), we should always be with *dharm*/righteousness. We must keep in mind that being false witness is being unrighteous.

3. Non-violence

Non-violence is a great value that India has taught the world. Our ancestors have taught us to live in brotherly cooperation with fellow beings, animals and even plants. The most important tool of Gandhiji in his fight for freedom was non-violence. The reason behind the success of independence struggle was non-violence itself. Lord Jesus replaced the principle “eye for eye” taught in Old Testament with the revolutionary principle to “keep the sword in the cover” and “one who takes sword will die by the sword”.

4. Love

Our view of life is “*SnehamanuAkhilasaramoozhiyil*” which means love is the sum and substance of life. 1 John 4: 8 tells us “whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love”. Love is the thread that binds this world together. Lord Jesus has taught us not only to forgive those who do wrong to us but to love them too. Only if you can love the brother whom you can see, you can love God whom you cannot see.

5. Peace

India is a country which longs for peace. People of different religions lived here like brothers. Peaceful co-existence should be our goal.

John the Baptist – a model for value based life

Bible introduces John the Baptist as the forerunner of Lord Jesus Christ. Zechariah, his father prophesied about him as, “Child, you will be called as the prophet of the most high”. However, there are no records on the life of John, who was born to the old priest Zechariah and the elderly lady Elizabeth as per God’s plan, until he reveals himself to the public. St. Luke has written about him that the child grew and became strong in spirit.

Let us see the values a Christian can learn from the life of John the Baptist.

1. Selflessness

He dressed in a simple manner – a dress made of camel hair with a leather belt on his hip was his attire. He travelled throughout Judea but neither worked nor talked as if he is a prophet. The people did not realize him like the one who came to prepare the way for Jesus. He thus teaches us that our greatness is not in the dress or outward appearance, position, name, fame or wealth; but it is in our character, attitude and truthfulness.

2. Humility

During time of John, most of the people believed that he was the Messiah. Had he said so or even allowed them to believe so, all the people would have accepted him as Messiah. But what John told was that the one who is stronger than him was coming and he himself was not even worthy to kneel down to remove the slippers from His feet. He even sent his disciples to follow Jesus. Let us not forget what John said, “He must become more important while I become less important”(St. John 3:30). Let us not forget that a true Christian gives less importance to his ego (“I”) and give Jesus the number one position in his life.

3. Strong words

St. Luke has written that John spoke in strong words to the people on “repentance for remission of sins”. John the Baptist, who used very strong words to warn people against their sinful ways including those in authority, is a model for the youth of all times.

4. Appreciated by Lord Jesus Christ

Jesus states about John the Baptist that among those born of women there is nobody greater than him (St. Luke 7:28). He earned this appreciation only because of the high values he held in life.

What does Bible say about Christian Values?

The New Testament gives information about two different worlds.

1. This world under the authority of Satan which gives importance to worldly values. Money and position are the controlling powers of this world.
2. God’s kingdom, which cannot be seen by naked eyes. It is not money or position that has the control there. Values like truth, ethics, justice, piety etc. have importance in the kingdom of God.

Following are some of the values that a true Christian who works for the kingdom of God should emulate in his life.

1. Respect and adore only the true God

Once a scribe asked Lord Jesus, which is the most important commandment? Lord Jesus said “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” (St. Mark 12:29-30) In the modern world there are many factors that distance people from God.

- Over indulgence in luxuries
- Thirst to amass wealth (money, position and worldly pleasures)
- Giving importance to matters other than God (idolatry, job, entertainment). We should be able to worship God by distancing ourselves from all these.

2. Love your neighbors

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (St. Mark 12:31). Through the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus tells us how should be our behavior towards our fellow beings. A Christian should be one who is concerned about what will happen to a person who is not attended rather than his own personal loss.

3. Be humble

World accepts and honors only those who are humble. A humble person can always hold his head high before others. He is not quarrelsome; he can accept others and recognize their grace. In the gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 20, we read about the mother of Zebedee’s children. She is seen requesting Jesus to allow her children to sit on his right and left in the heaven on the day of His glory. To this Jesus replies that those who want to become great should serve others.

4. Lead a pure life

1 Corinthians 6: 19-20 states: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

One should remember that the yardstick of his spiritual life is not in just abjuring totally from sexual life. Loose lifestyles, engaging in activities which are against one’s conscience, negative thought processes etc. all question his morality.

5. Utilize the time and resources for good reasons

Time and all other resources are gifts from God. We should be careful to utilize them judiciously in a way that is beneficial for ourselves and others. When we use them carelessly, they will be lost forever leading to our own fall. The Holy Bible advises us to use time judiciously. We know that Lord Jesus used most of his time to serve those who were in distress. When we are reluctant to share our resources which are received as gift from God, remember that we too are like the rich man in the parable that Lord Jesus told.

6. Practice what you preach. Do not be hypocrites

Bible tells us that our deeds should justify our words. Lord Jesus compared words not justified by deeds to fermented dough. St. Matthew 23:27-28 says: “How terrible for you, teachers of the law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You are like white washed tombs, which look fine on the outside but are full of bones and decaying corpses inside. In the same way, on the outside you appear good to everybody but inside you are full of hypocrisy and sins.” Let us not forget that a lifestyle where our actions justify our words is one of the greatest values that Christianity teaches.

7. Do not be self-righteous/Do not judge others

No one is perfect: Romans 3:23 says: “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”. St. Matthew 7:1-2 states: “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get”. These bible verses should remind us to remove the stick from our eyes before we try to remove the dust from other’s eyes. Let us not keep anger or vengeance against others.

We should keep in mind that Lord Jesus emphasized the revolutionary idea of “love your enemy” in place of the Jewish law of “an eye for an eye”. We read in St. Matthew 5:38-40, “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and

if anyone would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well.”

We should keep in mind that one who keeps hatred towards others will never be successful in his life. We know beyond doubt that when we forgive others, our father in heaven will forgive us and care for us.

Conclusion

We should recognize that the greatness of a person is neither in his wealth nor in his outward appearance but is in his attitude and the way he reacts in different situations. Good character is greater than any other fame. Great leaders whom the world respects and remembers today are not those who led luxurious lives but people of great character. Jesus Christ, Gandhiji, Lincoln, Mother Theresa all have attained this great character only through their value based life. Those who believe and live a value based life will be called noble. They will be

- Courageous but not proud
- Humble but not meek
- Confident but not egoistic
- Kind hearted but not slaves of any inabilities
- Able to make strong decisions but not arrogant
- Gentle but not lifeless

You too can be noble – only one condition; have a value based life.

Questions

1. What do you understand by value based life?
2. What are the values that a Christian should learn from the life of John the Baptist?
3. What are the causes of challenges of values based life?
4. Identify a few Christian values

Project

Prepare a list of values a Christian should hold high in life based on “Sermon on the Mount”.