

TO THE GLORY OF GOD

**(A New Testament Approach of Eastern Christian
Vision of Life)**

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Divyabodhanam Book Series 12

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Statement

Dear ones,

By God's abundant grace, the first stage of Divyabodhanam program has concluded successfully. The preparation of ten books on our faith related topics itself is a good achievement.

The program that commenced only in 1984 had 49 centers associated with it. There were 130 women and 210 men who participated in this exercise. His Holiness Catholicose is distributing certificates on August 9, 1986 to those who have completed the course (10 subjects).

Now, we are coming to the second stage. Apart from accepting participants for the second batch of the preliminary stage, new courses are being formulated for those who have completed first stage.

The target for the second stage too is to deepen the knowledge of church members in their understanding of faith. This would be useful equally for parents and youth possessing basic

education. This process is a basic requirement for all Sunday school teachers.

What is being looked forward to is ten thousands of members completing this course within the next few years resulting in an all-round progress in the faith centered life of our people. Let these books be instrumental in Holy Spirit to experience the love of God that is expressed with the God coming down as a human in Christ. Let there be showering of Blessings from the Almighty to all of you.

Kottayam,

July 2, 1986

Paulose Mar
Divyabodhanam

Gregoriose,

Dr
President,

From the Publisher's Desk

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Unit 1

Thy Kingdom Come

Lesson 1

To the Kingdom of God, to the Glory of God

Kingdom that has Come and to Come # The Origin of Kingdom of God (a) Kingdom of God is within you (b) Victory over Satanic Dominance (c) Kingdom of God through Tribulations # The Great Feast of Kingdom of God

Entry into the kingdom of God is entry to the Glory of God. Apostle St Paul reminds us, “God calls you to share in his own Kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12). The words kingdom and glory are used here in parallel sense. Even in the gospels too, these usages are seen. For example, in Mark 10:37, James and John seek positions on either side of Jesus in his glory. When Matthew narrates the incident in 20:21 they are seeking positions on either side of Jesus in his Kingdom. The Jewish religious thoughts during the time of Jesus Christ considered Kingdom of God and Glory of God as ideas close to each other. The Messiah of Jehovah would appear in his full glory and establish the promised Kingdom of Jehovah. The glory lost during the fall would be returned to man. Glory of God would fill the whole earth. “Yet, there was hope that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom. 8:20). This is the true experience of Kingdom of God.

Kingdom that has Come and to Come:

With the coming of Christ, Kingdom of God too has come. The promise of God that His anointed one would be sent to redeem the human race and that his Kingdom would be established is being satisfied through Jesus Christ. Listen to the words of Jesus preaching the Good news of the Kingdom of God; “The right time has come and the Kingdom of God is near” (Mark 1:15). The new era of redemption has already commenced in Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, this era is called Eschaton. The history of mankind has entered a new era which is the final and crucial one. The initiatives from the Kingdom of God that is materialised through Jesus Christ transforms the condition of mankind from the bondage of Satan, suffering from illness and subjected to death to an experience of freedom, peace and one filled with life. We have seen a Christ who drives demons out of men; we have seen a Christ who heals the sick; we have seen a Christ who raises the dead. These are all pointing out that the Kingdom of God is

here. We can say that these are signs of the Kingdom of God. Our Lord himself has said, “No, it is rather by means of the power of God that I drive out demons, and this proves that the Kingdom of God has already come to you” (Luke 11:20; Matthew 12:28).

The Kingdom of God has come into history; has come to this world through Jesus Christ. But Kingdom of God will not reveal its fullness in this world that is subject to limitations of time and space. The revelation of Kingdom of God in its fullness happens only with the second coming of Jesus Christ. What is revealed to us today is just a small fraction of those unlimited possibilities of the Kingdom that comes in its fullness in future. We have made our entry into the Kingdom of God and are growing forward to its wholeness. That is why Christ said, “Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21) and taught us to pray, “Thy Kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10).

The Origin of Kingdom of God:

In difference to the concept of Kingdom in the material world, there are two or three basic characteristics namely, (a) Kingdom of God is internal (b) Kingdom of God is victory over satanic supremacy (c) Kingdom of God gets established through sufferings.

- (a) Kingdom of God is within you: The term Kingdom of God pictures in our mind a territory that is subjected to God's reign. Indeed, 'Reign of God' would be a better translation than 'Kingdom of God'. The Kingdom of God established by Christ does not match the concepts of material kingdom. "My Kingdom does not belong here" (John 18:36). By this statement, Christ has corrected the material dimensions many have been holding about Kingdom of God. In the gospel according to St Matthew, 'Kingdom of God' and 'Kingdom of Heaven' are used in the same sense. Usage of the term 'Kingdom of Heaven' indicates that kingdom of God is not material. Kingdom of God is an internal power

that transforms nature of man and his whereabouts in its absoluteness. Kingdom of God doesn't have an external appearance with a battalion of soldiers, power of wealth or worldly authority. "The Kingdom of God does not come in such a way as to be seen. No one will say, 'look, it is here' or 'there it is'; because the Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17: 20, 21). When we say that the Kingdom of God is not material, that doesn't mean that the Good News of the Kingdom of God is confined exclusively to spirituality without touching the material side of mankind. The growth of the Kingdom of God has been in touch with the material and spiritual facets of mankind. The growth of Kingdom of God attains its fullness only when the evil forces which are keen to sustain poverty, injustice and exploitation are continuously questioned and man is redeemed. But this redemption cannot be précised to its external territories. There has

to be redemption in totality involving the spiritual and material facets of mankind.

(b) Victory over Satanic Supremacy: Kingdom of God is tranquillity and peace on one side, but continuous struggle on the other side. The struggle is against satanic forces and not against material powers. “For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities and cosmic powers of this dark age” (Eph. 6:12). Kingdom of God gets established when we end up victorious fighting against satanic forces that hold this world in darkness. The very first miracle Mark records in his gospel is, Jesus filled in Holy Spirit casting out a demon from a man after his victory over Satan in that one to one fight which took place in the desert, to commence his service in this world (Mark 1:21 – 28). This incident is a visual pointer to the coming of Kingdom of God (Matthew 12:28; Luke: 14:20). The purpose behind the redemption

acts of Jesus is to liberate man and the entire creation from Satan's slavery and darkness and bring to the glory of God.

(c) Kingdom of God Through Tribulations: A kingdom within the worldly material concepts are established and sustained through force. But the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is put in place through tribulations. As recorded in synoptic Gospels, the service of Jesus commences at Galilee, the northern state of Palestine and ends up at Jerusalem in Judea, the southern state. Jerusalem is the centre of the spiritual as also the material life of Jewish populace. The occasion Jesus enters Jerusalem is the days of Passover festival when the Jews recall their liberation from Egypt. The disciples calculated this to be a most suitable occasion to proclaim his kingdom and looked forward to its materialization. But the purpose of Jesus is not to set up a material kingdom. He is showing before the people a new order of the Kingdom of God by overcoming satanic forces

through his tribulations. Reading their mind, Christ has been trying to correct them many times. “Listen, he told them, we are going up to Jerusalem where the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the teachers of the Law. They will condemn him to death and then hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him, spit on him, whip him and kill him; but three days later, he will rise to life” (Mark 10:33; 8:31; 9:31). We see Jesus admonishing Peter as he has been intolerant at these statements (Mark 8:33). When James and John, sons of Zebedee seek positions importance in the Kingdom to be established by Jesus, he asks them, “Can you drink the cup of suffering that I must drink?” (Mark 10:38; Matthew 20; 22ff). What our Lord means here is the cup of tribulations. The prophetic hymn about the suffering servant in Isaiah 53 is fulfilled in Jesus. The King of New Testament is the suffering servant who sacrifices himself on the cross for

us by taking our illness, by carrying our pains, by getting wounded for our atrocities and destructed by our attacks. The cross of his sacrifice is the sign of the Kingdom of heaven.

The Great Feast of Kingdom of God:

Jesus uses many metaphors to reveal different natures of the Kingdom of heaven. Among them, a very catching one and a most meaningful one is the metaphor of the feast. This metaphor of the feast is sufficient to enlighten the friendliness, joy and fellowship of the Kingdom of God. Kingdom of God is filled with goodness, abundance and prosperity (Isaiah 25: 6 – 9). God invites all to be partakers of that fullness. This invitation is for the whole universe (Matthew 22:9; Luke 14:21). But there is an eligibility norm for entry to the feast; that is the invitee should be wearing the wedding garment (Matthew 22:11, 12). This wedding garment is nothing but the good deeds of saintly men (Revelations 19: 9).

During the time of Jesus, there was a community called Qumran community who were living near the coast of Dead sea. They believed that when God sent his anointed one, the Messiah, there would be a grand feast with him in which the community would participate. The bye laws of this community have provisions regarding the system to be followed in this feast. We should understand the meaning of this feast of New Testament in this background.

In Revelations 19: 7 – 9, Christ, the bridegroom joins Church, the bride and the feast is the occasion of their fellowship and union.

Holy Qurbana is a feast of the Heavenly Kingdom. By taking part in this feast, we are experiencing the Kingdom of God now itself. We are also continuously renewing our hope for the eternal feast of Heavenly Kingdom.

Questions:

1. 'Entry to Kingdom of God is entry to Glory of God'. Explain

2. How do we say that the Kingdom of God has come and is to come? Explain.
3. What are the factors (Origin of Kingdom of God) distinguishing Kingdom of God from the material Kingdom?
4. What are the natures of Kingdom of God being clarified through the metaphor of the feast?

Lesson 2

Church, that is His Body

Church and Kingdom of God # Different metaphors for Church # Church, Body of Christ # Many organs, one Body # Head and Body # Church, Wholeness of God # Background Thoughts

Church and Kingdom of God:

Church is not the Kingdom of God; one cannot confine Kingdom of God within the Church. Church is a community that has been called to the

Kingdom of God. That community can be said to be the children of God's Kingdom who experience the Kingdom of God living in it. In such a context, Church can be said to be the first fruit of Kingdom of God. It shall be seen that God desires to establish the Kingdom of God in this world for which He carries the Good News of that Kingdom in His hands; Church is an instrument with Him to realize this purpose. The Kingdom of God has been revealed through Jesus Christ; likewise, it should be revealed through the Church also. The words of Jesus, 'Kingdom of God is within you' become meaningful then. The nature of Kingdom of God cannot be understood through philosophical insights. Jesus Christ has been a living model of Kingdom of God. Similarly, the Church too shall reflect the nature of Kingdom of God through its way of life. Thus, Church has to be the living model of Kingdom of God and its symbol in the world. In short, church is the first fruit of Kingdom of God, model, symbol and instrument in the hands of God.

Different metaphors of the Church:

To illustrate the nature of Church, many metaphors are used in New Testament. Notable among them are new Israel, building, bride and body of Christ. Of these, between Christ and the Church and among the members mutually, the inseparable relation and unity is expressed in its perfection with building, bride and body of Christ. “Come as living stones, and let yourselves be used in building the spiritual temple -----“(1 Peter 2:5; 4:17; Eph. 2:19 – 22). The sustenance of the building of Church rests in the fellowship of members filled with love and unity. The union between Christ and Church is as strong as the union of the soul and body of a bride and groom. Love, sacrifice and sharing is the basis of the relationship between husband and wife; self sacrificing love on the cross is the basis of the relationship between Christ and Church (Eph. 5:22 – 33; Revelations 19: 7 – 9). ‘Body of Christ’ is not just a metaphor for Church; indeed Church is the body of Christ.

Church, the body of Christ:

In Greek language, the word 'body' means body of man, but there is one more metaphoric meaning. To show the unity or fellowship of a group, the same word body is used like an association of people or a battalion of soldiers or even to express the unity of this world. In the language of English too, the metaphoric meaning is in use. Different organs of a human body and like that many members joining together to form an association or a battalion of soldiers or such organizations come as a 'body'. When St Paul says, "though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body" (Rom. 12:5), we have the same meaning. However, when St Paul uses the term 'body of Christ', the meaning is very deep. First one is the difference between the word body in Greek language and the body that is the Church; the second one is an association formed by many members; thus in short, body of Christ can be understood as a body, as also an

association of its members or a body of members as strongly bound as a human body. If the former is a comparison of body and association, the latter could be a comparison of Church and body of Christ. Look at these verses: “his body, the Church” (Col. 1:24) and “The Church is Christ’s body” (Eph.1:23).

Many organs, one body:

There were differences among the faithful in the Church of Corinth on account of some claiming to be higher than others based on the gifts of Holy Spirit. Realising this, St Paul makes them understand the mystery of union in the body of Christ with a comparison between the big and small organs of human body. Church is not simply a setup formed as an organization. Though Church has an organized character, it happens to be a living reality. With Christ as also with other members, Church has a strong, inseparable and lively relation. The basis of this relation is that unique flow of life spreading across the entire body. “In the same way, all of us, whether Jews

or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit, and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor. 12:13). “If one part of the body suffers, all other parts suffer with it; if one part is praised, all the other parts share its happiness” (1 Cor. 12:26). The reason is “All of you are Christ’s body, and each one is a part of it” (1 Cor. 12:27).

Head and Body:

The living relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church has been illustrated by St Paul in his epistles to Colossians and Ephesians. While explaining the relation between head and body, St Paul tells, Christ is the head and Church, the body (Col. 1:18; 2:10; Eph. 1:22; 4:15, 16; 5:23). While there is an inseparable relation between head and body, there is a notable difference too. That is, head is not just an organ of the body; head is the centre of the body. Body moves as controlled by the head. “Under Christ’s control, the whole body is nourished and held together by its joints and ligaments, and it grows as God wants it to grow”

(Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:16). Thus, the Church which is the body grows up to its fullness looking to Christ as model. “We must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head” (Eph. 4:15).

Church, Wholeness of God:

In his epistles to Ephesians and Colossians, St Paul views the Church as the realistic facet of the wholeness of Godliness. This is accepted by the Church from Christ as his body. “The full content of the divine nature lives in Christ, in his humanity and you have been given full life in union with him” (Col. 2:9). This full content of divine nature flows abundantly into the Church. The reason for this is that Church is in union with Christ. The fullness given by the Father in Jesus Christ is revealed through the Church. What has been commenced by Christ in the history is being completed by the Church. Whatever sufferings are lacking in the sacrifice of Christ has to be completed in his body. “I am helping to complete what still remain of Christ’s sufferings on behalf of his body, which is the Church” (Col. 1:24).

The fullness of human race and universe is Jesus Christ. Christ is the first borne to all creation. All creations were through him and for him. Christ is the cause for all creations. The re creation of the universe is being done by Father through Christ. Father is reconciling everything to him through Jesus Christ, the first fruit resurrected from the departed (Col. 1:15 -22). “God put all things under Christ’s feet and gave him to the Church as supreme Lord over all things. The Church is Christ’s body, the completion of him who completes all things everywhere” (Eph. 1:22, 23).

Background Thoughts:

The teaching of St Paul that Church is the body of Christ and the whole mankind turns one body in union with Jesus Christ has two lines of thoughts behind it.

- a. Jewish Background: What made St Paul come to take the word ‘body’ to express the union Christians have among themselves and with Christ? What were the influential thoughts

that led him to express this as the union in one person's body? In this context, it is noteworthy that the traditions of the Jewish Rabbis during the time of St Paul used to teach about the union of the whole mankind in Adam. According to that tradition, the making of Adam and his body structure symbolized the union of the entire human race. Adam was created by God using the soil collected from all over the world. The name Adam itself is not that of an individual, but of human race in general. This illustrates the union of human race in Adam. This was what the Rabbis had taught then. The entire mankind originates from Adam; the whole mankind sustains in Adam. Thus Adam is a combined personality involving the entire mankind.

1 Cor. 15:45 has a concept of St Paul presented as first Adam and last Adam relating Adam and Christ; this is connected to

Jewish tradition. The fall of first Adam resulted in the mankind being submissive to sin; thus sin and death entered the world through Adam. The whole human race became partakers in Adam. Likewise, a new human race is being formulated in the last Adam. In the first Adam, mankind submissive to sin had a union and likewise, in Christ, the last Adam, there is union of mankind in the redemption and resurrection in Jesus Christ. “And just as all people were made sinners as the result of disobedience of one man, in the same way they will all be put right with God as the result of the obedience of one man” (Rom. 5:19). [Read Romans 5: 12 – 21].

The first Adam is the centre of creation. The redeemed human race is united with Christ and thus a combined personality is created. “In the same way, all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit,

and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor. 12:13).

b. Christian Background: What makes St Paul to teach that the Church is the body of Christ is the participation of the entire Church from one bread and one cup in the Holy Qurbana. “The cup we use in the Lord’s Supper and for which we give thanks to God: when we drink from it, we are sharing in the blood of Christ. And the bread we break: when we eat it, we are sharing in the body of Christ. Because there is one loaf of bread, all of us, though many, are one body, we all share the same loaf” (1 Cor. 10; 16, 17). By sharing from the same loaf, we are partakers of the one body of Christ. During the Last Supper, our Lord after blessing the bread and handing over to his disciples says, ‘this is my body’ (Matthew 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24).

The body of Christ is the resurrected body; that has been sacrificed on the cross for the

redemption of mankind, has overcome death and has been carrying the glory of resurrection. Sacrifice and glorification is continuing in the church, that is, the body of Christ. "Since we have become one with him dying as he did, in the same way we shall be one with him by being raised to life as he was" (Rom. 6:5). Both these events are being continued in the Church centred in the Holy Qurbana. Holy Qurbana has been meaningful in the Church life as the Church is humbling itself for the world through Holy Qurbana, the Church is transforming itself to the glory of resurrection, and the Church transforms the world. Through sufferings, the mission of the sacrifice of Church is realised. As St Paul says, "By means of my physical sufferings, I am helping to complete what still remains of Christ's sufferings on behalf of his body, the Church" (Col. 1:24).

By part taking in the Holy Bread and Wine in the service of Holy Qurbana, the Church is becoming the resurrected body of Christ. The Church is becoming the life and personality of Christ. This experience is being continuously fulfilled by the Church through Holy Qurbana. St Paul sees the relationship between Christ and the body of Christ, that is, the Church in this manner.

Questions:

1. What is the relationship between Kingdom of God and the Church?
2. Explain how does 'Body of Christ' reveal the unity of Church?
3. Explain the background of New Testament thought 'Body of Christ'.

Lesson 3

Mystery of God

Heavenly Church and Divine Mysteries #
Mystery in New Testament # Unrevealed
Mysteries # Redemption of Gentiles # All in Union
with Christ # Holy Mysteries #

Eastern Churches call the Sacraments of the Church as Holy Mysteries, particularly the Holy Qurbana. Why do we call the Holy Qurbana as Holy Mystery? An attempt is being made in this lesson to find the Biblical base for this. In short we can say that, be it in the New Testament or in the Old Testament, mysteries of God are those plans and thoughts of God for redemption of man and the universe. During the Old Testament days, God used to reveal His mysteries or His plans about the universe to the people, as and when needed, through prophets as also through chosen men. However, from the days beyond the very beginning, wholeness of the redemption plan was undisclosed with God; this is now revealed in the fullness of time through Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Sacraments, Church participates in this

redemption process that has been fulfilled in Christ and leads the whole universe to it.

Heavenly Church and Divine Mysteries:

The equivalent in Hebrew for the term Mysteries in New Testament is 'Sod'. This word has two meanings. (1) The Heavenly Assembly or Council of God (2) The Secret Counsel in that assembly: Reading the first two chapters of the book of Job, we find 'the day came for the heavenly beings to appear before the Lord'. In Psalm 82: 1 and 6, we read about the 'heavenly council', the 'assembly of the gods' and 'sons of the Most High'. Again, in Psalm 89: 5, 6 and 7, there are mentions about 'holy ones', 'heavenly beings' and 'council of holy ones'. All these point to the 'sod' of God in the Old Testament. According to Old Testament, the true characteristic of a prophet is that he stands in the 'sod'. This is the criterion to distinguish between a true prophet and a false prophet. Let us see what the prophet Jeremiah says while warning the false prophets, "But which of them has stood in the council of the Lord to see or hear

His word?” (Jeremiah 23:18). We have the same point in the Book of Job too: Eliphaz asks, “Do you listen in God’s council?” (Job 15:8). This shows that those prophets who enter the council of God get to know about the will of God. For this also, the term used is ‘sod’. Amos has recorded a common saying prevailed then, “Surely, the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants, the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

In short, the word ‘sod’ has these meanings: the mysterious heavenly council of Yahweh, its mysterious counsel, the prudential plans about man and universe.

Chapter 2 of the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament helps us to understand the meanings of the word ‘mysteries’ in New Testament. Verses 2:4 – 7:28 in the Book of Daniel are originally written in Aramaic. In chapter 2, the word mystery is used eight times. In Aramaic, the equivalent word is ‘razz’. The meaning of the vision Nebuchadnezzar had could not be explained by the wise men or magicians. “No wise

man, enchanter, magician, or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the days to come” (Daniel 2:27 – 29). Daniel could comprehend the divine mystery and pass on the meanings to the King. Here, we can see Daniel as one of the ancient prophets who could enter the heavenly council of God and understand the divine mysteries for the future. The words of Amos that God reveals His mysteries to prophets have become true here also.

Mystery in New Testament:

The word mystery or mysteries has been used seventeen times in New Testament. Mostly, they are in the epistles of St Paul. As such, we have to look into these epistles to understand the New Testament meaning of mysteries.

Unrevealed Mystery:

As far as the world is concerned, the divine plan of redemption comes from the extremely vast wisdom of God. This was pre designed by God before the creation of universe and remained unrevealed to the past and also to generations (1 Cor. 2:7; Rom. 16:24; Col. 1:26; Eph. 3: 5, 9). “No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. ----- No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor. 2: 7). This wisdom is divine and it won’t be there for everybody. This goes only to those who are matured in spiritual growth to make entry to the mysteries of God. So, St Paul says, the wisdom behind the redemption plan of God is expressed by Apostles as mystery. What he means by expressing as mystery is that it is hidden to worldly men, but revealed by God in His spirit to Apostles (1 Cor. 2:10)as the mystery of God’s plan of redemption. The ordinary can see the

wisdom of God as hidden only. This mysterious nature of wisdom of God made it a mystery.

With the help of synoptic gospels, this can be clarified further. Our Lord is revealing the mysterious wisdom about the Kingdom of God only to his disciples. “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them” (Matthew 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10). Those who are blind from ignorance or blind from pre conceived notions can never have the mystery of redemption revealed. “They may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding” (Mark 4:12).

Christ, the Mystery:

The sum and substance of the divine mystery of the New Testament is mainly the activities of Christ leading to the redemption right from his taking flesh up to ascension to heaven in his full glory. St Paul sees six crucial factors in the life of Christ and has expressed in 1 Tim. 3; 16. They are:

(1) Revealed in flesh (2) Justified in Spirit (3) Appeared to angels (4) Preached among Gentiles (5) Believed by world (6) Ascended in Glory. St Paul qualifies these as the mystery of fear of God or mystery of Christian faith. He exhorts Deacons that this mystery is to be kept in their conscience of purity (1 Tim. 3:9).

The Apostle St Paul further says that not just the life and deeds of Christ, but Christ himself is the mystery of God (Col. 2:2; 4:3; Eph. 3:4).

Redemption of Gentiles:

A facet of God's redemption plan is pin pointed in Eph. 3: 2 – 10. The understanding that Jews alone are entitled to be children of God and they alone are to inherit the Kingdom of God stand corrected here by God placing Gentiles also part takers of redemption through Jesus Christ. "This mystery (of Jesus Christ) is that through the gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and shares together in the

promise in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 3:6; Rom. 15:16; Col 1:25 -27).

All in Union with Christ:

The epistle to Ephesians points out yet another very important aspect of God’s redemption plan that gets fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This is the mystery of the will of God: “To bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (Eph. 1:19). The redemption plan of God is not for mankind alone; but it is for all in heaven and earth, seen and unseen. Here the term ‘in heaven’ means rulers, authorities, powers and such of those illustrations by St Paul about angels (Eph. 1:21; 3:19; 6:12). These powers exercise their authorities over mankind and victory over them is part of the target of redemption plan as interpreted by St Paul. The Apostle also points out that the term ‘in earth’ has a universal vision involving all creations apart from men. This redemption plan of God will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ in the fullness of time (Eph. 1:10).

Holy Mysteries:

The term 'mysteries' has been used specifically since 4th century AD in place of sacraments. St Paul in 1 Cor. 4:1 says thus: "Men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the 'secret things' of God". That is, the Apostles are the stewards of God's mysteries. Reflecting this, St Ignatius has called Deacons of the Church as the 'servants of mysteries of Jesus Christ' in his letter to Thrallians (2:3). There is no conclusive inference that the term mystery or secret means Holy Qurbana. However, circumstances pin point to Holy Qurbana in this letter of St Ignatius. Neither Justin Martyr nor Tertullian calls sacraments as mysteries, but they have stated that the 'mysteries' of Gentiles are satanic imitations of the sacraments of Christians. The religions of Gentiles called Mystery Religions looked forwards to be partakers in the lives and deeds of their gods. But what is being looked forward to in Christian sacraments is to join with

God's plans of redemption being fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

In the Holy Bible, God's redemption plan is a mystery. Jesus Christ and his plans for redemption has been hidden in the past and revealed in fullness of time as God's mystery. Sacraments of the Church expressively enact the life of Christ and his redemption scheme through worships and rituals for the present to experience. In short, sacraments are put in place for the Church to participate in them and experience the essence of redemption. By and large, they are referred to as mysteries in this background.

The Greek root 'mysterion' (mystery) means 'to initiate into'. God's mysteries would be revealed only to those who initiate themselves to the presence of God. This is the reason that God's plans are, in a way, hidden before the common world today. But God has opened the door for His Church to enter His heavenly presence and has been conveying the essence of His mysteries. Thus, it has become possible for the Church to

initiate into Him and feel the mystery of God's redemption plan, thereby, taking part in the plan that is getting fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This exercise regularly gets going in Church through the Holy Sacraments.

Among all the Sacraments, the term mystery is mostly used for Holy Baptism (including anointment of Holy Chrism) as also for Holy Qurbana. Holy Baptism is the entry into God's heavenly Church and also to the kingdom of heaven as well as our union with the redeeming death and resurrection of Christ. Through Holy Qurbana, we taste the redeeming life and deeds of Jesus Christ while living in the present. We participate in the sacrifice on cross and the glory of resurrection; by accepting the Holy body and blood, we get to experience the divine mystery of Christ.

Questions:

1. Explain the meanings of 'sod' and 'razz' of Old Testament.
2. Explain the meaning of 'mystery' in New Testament.
3. Why do we call the sacraments of the Church as 'Holy Mysteries'?

Lesson 4

In my Remembrance

Remembrance in Old Testament (1)
Remembrance and Redemption (2)
Remembrance and renewal of Covenant (3)
Remembrance and rituals in worship # Remembrance in New Testament #

While instituting Holy Qurbana, our Lord entrusts to his disciples saying, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11: 24, 25). Look at this word 'remembrance'; based on its routine meaning, many Christian denominations consider

Holy Qurbana as a service that is a memorial and a symbol to remember the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. But the Bible has a far deeper meaning to the word 'remembrance' in Old Testament as also in New Testament. While remembering our God who has been interfering in progressive history of this universe, we are also having an inter face of His redemption acts and experiencing it directly through worships and rituals. Thus, 'remembrance' of Christ points out the occasion where his presence is realized as well as our participation in his flesh and blood providing us life and redemption. Thus, 'remembrance' denotes presence and participation.

Remembrance in Old Testament:

Remembrance and Redemption Acts:

Remembrance in the Old Testament concept is not confined to just memory, but action is also associated with it. The Hebrew equivalent is 'zkr' and the Syriac equivalent 'dkar'. "God remembered Noah"; "God remembered

Abraham”; “God remembered Rachel”. We have such statements quite often in Old Testament at different places. In all such occasions, God remembers men to show them mercy. Jehovah remembers Noah and there ends the flood (Genesis 8:1). God remembers Abraham and saves Lot from annihilation (Genesis 19:29). God remembers Rachel and opens her womb that she is blessed with a son (Genesis 30:22). It can be noted here that in all these incidents, remembrance is associated with redemption.

Remembrance and renewal of Covenant: We see God entering into covenants with men in the Old Testament on a few occasions. In all such occasions, God takes the initiative and calls upon man to such covenants. The covenants have been entered with Noah (Genesis 9: 8 – 17), with Abraham (Genesis 15:18) and with the people of Israel (Genesis 24:8). When the people are faithful and obedient to God, He has this covenant live with Him; but when the people stay away from the covenant, God forgets them. Under such

plights, Israel pleads before God to remember them. “You understand, O Lord; remember me and care for me” (Jeremiah 15:15). All the prophets have been repeatedly exhorting Israel to remember God always. The meaning of this exhortation to ‘remember God’ is that they should renew their covenant with God and turn to repentance. “Remember these things, O Jacob, for you are my servant, O Israel. I have made you, you are my servant; O Israel, I will not forget you. ----- I have redeemed you” (Isaiah 44: 21, 22)).

Remembrance and rituals in worship:

‘Remembrance’ is a crucial factor in the worship of Jews. A main purpose of their worship was to recall the great deeds of God in history. Sacrifices and feasts are all for this. Their main feasts and rituals such as Passover (Exodus 12, 13), festival of the tabernacle (Leviticus 23: 33 – 44), Purim festival (Esther 9:18 – 28) and observance of Sabbath (Exodus 20: 8 -11) are all remembering the interference of God in their history on various

occasions. This is very specifically illustrated in Old Testament when explaining about Passover. “This is a day you have to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord – a lasting ordinance” (Exodus 12:14); thus commands Jehovah on the observance of Passover festival. For the Israelites to remember God and also for God to remember them, not only specific seasons, but places are also identified and earmarked. God has commanded to construct an altar of earth and says, “Wherever I cause my name to be honoured, I will come to you and bless you” (Exodus 20:24).

To remember the redemption acts of God and to experience them in the present, the Church has formulated specific rituals, prayers and exhortations. To enact the incidents of the past, there are adequate rituals, related readings from the Holy Scriptures, illustrations from the traditions passed on by the word of mouth and exhortations; these are all different facets of worship. The worshipping community lend their

ears carefully to these and take part in the rituals. Various festivals as well as the worships and related rituals are occasions for the elder generation to explain the meanings of such rituals to younger generation as also to look forward to the future with hope in God in relation to the interference of God in history linking the generations one after the other. “On that day, tell your son, I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt” (Exodus 13:8).

There is a timely significance in remembering the past good deeds of God. “The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today” (Deuteronomy 6:24). Old Testament exhorts us to participate actively in the redemption deeds God has done during the days of our fathers so as to reveal them as of the present. “The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our fathers that the Lord made this covenant, but with us who are alive here today” (Deuteronomy

5: 2, 3). It is worth recalling what is said about Passover in 'Mishna', a Jewish text: 'While we observe this festival, we should do it as if we are proceeding from Egypt' (Pesahim 10:5). People confronts God in their worship, who has done great things for them in history; they proclaim that even in the present, the one who protects and provides for them is the same God. "Come and see what God has done; ----- He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the waters on foot; ----- He has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping" (Psalms 66: 5 – 9).

In the light of these discussions, we can understand that the past events are enacted through worships to make them relevant for the present and reveal them as live even now.

Remembrance in New Testament:

'Anamnesis' is the Greek word for remembrance and it means deeds brought into memory. Whatever we have come across Old Testament in

relation to remembrance are relevant in New Testament also. Like any idea of New Testament stands related to Old Testament, this too gets fully revealed only through the Old Testament thought processes.

Christ said, “Do this in remembrance of me”. This is similar to the command given by Jehovah about the observance of Passover; “This is a day you have to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord – a lasting ordinance” (Exodus 12:14). If the exodus from Egypt to Canaan is the background of Passover festival, the background for the institution of Holy Qurbana is the death on the cross and resurrection. In the New Testament interpretation, Holy Qurbana is a New Testament Passover. The Old Testament Passover is instituted in the previous night of their exodus from Egypt; institution of Holy Qurbana took place just prior to the passion of Christ and his death on the cross.

In difference to Old Testament, there are two things in the New Testament's remembrance. (1) After recording the words of Christ on the institution of Holy Qurbana, St Paul gives an interpretation that in Holy Qurbana "you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes"; thus, the words "in remembrance of me" is to recall not the redemption acts alone of Christ, but Christ himself. Through Holy Qurbana, we relate ourselves with the whole person of Christ who has come in flesh. We grow akin to the person of Christ by being part and parcel of him through our participation in his flesh and blood. (2) It is through the acts of Holy Spirit and not through human efforts that we have our relationship with Christ in Holy Qurbana and our partnership in the redemption acts. The Holy Spirit, who keeps the Church alive in all things, makes Christ our contemporary. "But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26). The

prayer calling Holy Spirit (Epiclesis) in the Holy Qurbana has been formulated in this line.

In short, we can sum up the New Testament thoughts on remembrance like this. Through worships and rituals, the Church lives with Christ and maintains relation with him who has fulfilled his acts of redemption in history; the Church experiences him as the redeemer and grows in the hope of fullness of redemption process. Thus, the Church unifies past, present and future in Jesus Christ and ends the gap between them and makes entry into the feel of eternity in this life itself.

Questions:

1. Explain the relationship between remembrance and worship in the light of Old Testament.
2. What are the main thoughts coming up on remembrance in the New Testament?

Lesson 5

In Fellowship with Christ

Fellowship with Jesus Christ # Fellowship with Holy Spirit # Fellowship in Divine Nature # Relation and Fellowship between Believers # Fellowship through Holy Qurbana

“God who has called you into fellowship with His son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful” (1 Cor. 1:9). The word fellowship has its original Greek as ‘Koinonia’. The meaning of Koinonia is not just an assembly or a joint get together which are simply a sense that we have peripherally; but in its true essence, Koinonia has to be understood as a

fellowship where everybody receives from a common source, shares and contributes to the same source maintaining a unity at its depth within a mutual togetherness. In the New Testament, the term Koinonia is used to denote our fellowship with Jesus Christ, our participation in flesh and blood of Jesus in the Holy Qurbana, our fellowship in the divine nature, the relationship between the believers as a reflection of our union and fellowship with Jesus Christ as also sharing of material possessions between believers. The Syriac equivalent of this word is 'shavthofooso', which means fellowship.

It is worth noting that another term for Holy Qurbana in Syriac is 'shavthofooso'. In fact, Koinonia is the deepest relation or selfless partnership. Either of these terms can be used befitting the situations.

Fellowship with Jesus Christ:

St Paul in 1 Cor.1: 9 say that we are called to be in fellowship with Jesus Christ. The Apostle points

out how should our relationship with Christ should be, citing the metaphor of olive and wild olive. Gentiles were wild olive not bearing fruit; they had been grafted to Christ, the olive bearing fruit. Thus, “now they share in the nourishing sap from the olive root” (Rom 11:17).

The most crucial facet of our fellowship with Christ is partnership with the life of Jesus Christ. In Philippians 3:10, St Paul states that we are partners in the passion of Christ. Partnership in the passion of Christ leads us to partnership in resurrection. “Rather, be glad that you are sharing Christ’s sufferings, so that you may be full of joy when his glory is revealed” (1 Peter 4:13; Rom. 8:17). Peter calls himself ‘partner in the glory to be revealed’. St Paul who undertakes the passion of Christ has the Church of Corinth as a partner. “Just as we a share in Christ’s many sufferings, so also through Christ we share in God’s great help. ----- . We know that just as you share in our sufferings, you also share in the help we receive” (2 Cor. 1: 5, 7).

Fellowship with Holy Spirit:

The early Church that received Holy Spirit maintained a mutual fellowship and partnership and this was their main characteristic then. The fellowship with Holy Spirit reflects in our life in Church as our relationship with Jesus Christ as also among the members. Chapter 2 of the Book of Acts, in particular, verses 42 and 45, highlights the mutual partnership and unity among members of the Church. In New Testament, we have two references of fellowship with Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14 and Philippians 2:1). This usage has two levels of meaning: (1) Fellowship with Holy Spirit (2) Partnership with Holy Spirit (in the gifts). Both these signify fellowship in Holy Spirit. In 2 Corinthians 13:14, the benediction in the name of Holy Trinity mentions fellowship in Holy Spirit. In Philippians 2: 1 & 2, St Paul says affirmatively that the fellowship in Holy Spirit leads to mutual unity among believers. "Your life in Christ makes you strong and his love comforts you; you have fellowship with the Spirit, and you have kindness

and compassion for one another. I urge you, then, to make me completely happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and being one in soul and mind”.

Fellowship in Divine Nature:

Redemption in Jesus Christ is participation in divine nature. Man who is under sin is subjected to spoilage and decay. “He has given us the very great and precious gifts he promised, so that by means of these gifts you may escape from the destructive lust that is in the world, and may come to share the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Thus, by our fellowship with Jesus Christ, we are transformed to partners in divine nature. Always, there are two possibilities before man. Either he can grow in fellowship with divine nature or he can partner with evil. However, we cannot carry both of these with us. “How can light and darkness live together?” (2 Cor. 6:14). The one called to be in fellowship with God should depart from evil for good. St Paul has given this exhortation repeatedly on many occasions. “Take

no part in the sin of others” (2 Tim. 5:22; 2 John 11). “Have nothing to do with the worthless things that people do, things that belong to the darkness” (Eph. 5:11). St John says, “If, then, we say that we have fellowship with him, yet at the same time live in the darkness, we are lying both in our words and in our actions” (1 John 1:6). The Book of Revelations calls upon people to leave Babylon, a symbol of evil. “Come out my people! Come out from her! You must not take part in her sins; you must not share in her punishments” (Revelations 18; 4).

Relation and Fellowship between Believers:

- a. The fellowship of believers with Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit is reflected in the Church through the fellowship among the believers. St Paul has called Philemon as partner (Philemon: 17) as also Titus (2 Cor. 8:23). This way of addressing has not come out of love alone; they have been in fellowship with Jesus Christ and thus experiencing a deep union of spirit with him resulting in calling each other

partners. St Paul has been seeing similar fellowship between Jews and Gentiles also. He exhorts that this relationship has to be revealed through a partnership for material needs also. "Share your belongings with your needy fellow Christians, and open your homes to strangers" (Rom. 12:13; 15:27). The understanding about partnership among the believers has strengthened in the early Church in the background of the tribulations and persecutions they have been confronting. "For you have all shared with me in this privilege that God has given me, both now that I am in prison and while I was free to defend the gospel and establish it firmly.-----
-----". But it was very good of you to help me in my troubles" (Philippians 1:7; 4:14). Hebrews 10:33 commends on the Church that has partnered with the believers in their tribulations fighting for them.

b. St John, in his first epistle has used the term Koinonia to illustrate the relationship

between believers. Here too, the foundation of the relationship among believers is the fellowship with God. (1 John 1: 3 – 7).

c. We have seen that the Greek word 'Koinonia' can be given a meaning 'partnership'. However, in the common and routine style of Greek usage, 'Koinonia' means 'sharing'. Yet, 'give a share' has been attributed to 'Koinonia' very rarely. But, St Paul has been using 'Koinonia' to mean 'take share' and 'give share' with equal importance. Partnership becomes meaningful only in a give and take system. When the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem faced a scarcity of essentials, St Paul asked the Gentile Christians to raise funds to help them (1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 9: 5 -14; Acts 24:17). St Paul doesn't see this as some deeds of material nature; but as a reflection of the fellowship and union between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians in Jesus Christ. As such, St Paul sees the fund mobilization as a symbol of

partnership (Rom. 15: 26, 27; 2 Cor. 8:3; 4:13). The Apostles further stresses that partnership in material needs are in fact based on mutual union among the believers.

Fellowship through Holy Qurbana:

It is through Holy Qurbana that the fellowship the Church keeps with Jesus Christ and also among the believers is realized and experienced by all. St Paul makes an attempt to clarify this idea by making a comparison with the sacrifices of Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor. 10:16 – 22). According to Israelite religious culture, one who eats from the sacrificial offerings becomes a part taker of the sacrificial offerings (1 Cor. 10:18). Gentiles offer sacrifices to demons and whoever eats that turns to be in fellowship with demons (1 Cor. 10: 20). This was a belief prevailed then. Likewise, the one who eats from the Lord's Table are in fellowship with the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. Thus, those believers who are in fellowship with Jesus Christ through their participation in the Lord's Table should stay away from the sacrificial

offerings of Gentiles, as advised by St Paul (1 Cor. 10:21). In verse 17 here, the Apostle says that there would be a live relationship established among the believers also. This relationship originates from the fellowship with Jesus Christ; the reason being that we are all taking part in the same bread. Since all eat from the same bread, we are all one body.

Questions:

- 1.Explain the fellowship with Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit.
- 2.In what all ways do the fellowship among believers and their partnership get reflected in the life within the Church?

Lesson6

Service and Discipleship

Who is a friend? # Servant of Servants # Who is Bigger # Service to Jesus # Self Rejecting Service

Discipleship # Cost of Discipleship # Fullness of Discipleship #

Greek philosophers used to raise this question quite often: “How can one be happy if he keeps on serving others?” The attitude of Greeks towards service is evident here; serving is slavery; one who serves is not free; how can one feel happy so long he is not free! But the Jewish culture views service with honour. And if the master belongs to higher strata of the society, his servant too is honoured highly. Master – servant relationship is acceptable in Jewish culture. Thus to illustrate the relationship between God and man, the image of one serving before God is seen most appropriate.

Who is a friend?

The divine command “Love your neighbour as you love yourself” (Leviticus 19:18) indicates readiness to be in service to one’s friend. This is a glorious cultural tradition of Israel. However, a sect came up within the Jewish religion called Pharisees who

narrowed down the practical utility of this command. Who is a friend? This question was answered defining a friend as one who is righteous and stands by the commands of God; as result, the practice that no one need be loved or served unconditionally became the rule of the day. Serving a friend came to be accepted as a virtue that earns recognition before God and thus, the spirit of sacrifice simply vanished. One more system took root that there is no need to serve an undesirable person at his table. These three developments nullified the essence of the command to love a friend. It is in such a background our Lord answers the query of a Jewish teacher of Law, "Who is my friend?" narrating the metaphor of Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25 – 37). Through this metaphor, our Lord teaches that one who is in any tribulation or pain or suffering should be taken up as a friend, whoever he is. Thus, the view of Jesus on service stands related to Old Testament days on one hand, yet giving a new vision by cleansing the

wrong notions those have tarnished its true meaning in the Jewish religion. Comparing with the views of the Greek, what Jesus advocates is totally a new concept.

Servant of Servants:

From Luke 17:8 and John 12:2, we get the basic meaning of service in New Testament as serving at the table (for food). The master or the distinguished one sits relaxed on his chair and the servant waits on him with utmost care; if the servant is a woman, she stands near the table serving him with full concentration (Luke 17:8; John 12:2). Here the difference between a master and servant is quite clear. If this order is that of this world, our Lord teaches that there is another distinct order at the Kingdom of God and there, we have an ethics that is different from what we see here. During the second coming of our Lord, he would make those who have been meticulously serving in the Kingdom of God to sit for the feast and our Lord would wait on them and serve them (Luke 12:37). The master turns

servant of servants. This glorified experience of the Kingdom of God was shown by our Lord by washing the feet of disciples and wiping them during the Last Supper (John 13: 4 – 5).

Who is Bigger?

The teachings and actions of our Lord about those who serve and those being served were good enough to revitalize the values the society was keeping then. When there was a dispute among his disciples as to who among them was bigger, what Jesus advised them was sufficient to clarify this revitalization of values. In this world, supremacy is retained by officials by exercising their authority and prominent ones by wielding their power; “but this is not the way it is with you; rather, the greatest one among you must be like the youngest, and the leader must be like the servant” (Luke 22:26). Following this Jesus asks, “Who is greater, the one who sits down to eat or the one who serves him?” The answer to this question is quite clear for a common man; the one who sits down to eat is greater. Jesus too

agrees and then says, “But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27). Jesus is the Lord at the Kingdom of God; he calls his disciple to inherit the Kingdom; he empowers them to carry out the judgment sitting on their thrones. Such a glorified one stands before his disciples as a servant! This incomparable model calls for a total transformation that is needed in human relations. A Christian has just one route to grow into glorification; “Whoever wants to be first must place himself last of all and be the servant of all” (Mark 9:35; 10:44).

Service to Jesus:

All deeds arising from brotherly love is service. One who is counted as the least in society too is a brother and deserves to be served. The service offered to him is indeed service to Jesus Christ. If you deny serving him, we are denying our service to Jesus. And we have to answer for this on the day of final judgment. Listen to what our Lord says, “I was hungry but you would not feed me, thirsty but you would not give me a drink; I was a

stranger but you would not welcome in your homes, naked but you would not clothe me; I was sick and in prison but you would not take care of me. Then they will answer him, When Lord, did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and would not help you? The King will reply, I tell you, whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me” (Matthew 25: 42 – 45).

Self Rejecting Service:

Waiting at table and serving is a glorious model of service. Loving a brother too is glorious service. But service must reach that level of self sacrifice as Jesus taught us through his life. “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served; he came to serve and to give his life to redeem many people” (Mark 10:45). “A grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies; if it does die, then it produces many grains” (John 12:24). Like this, only those who take the oath to serve the Lord through self sacrifice alone can follow the Lord.

Our Lord rewards him. Lord says, “Whoever wants to serve me must follow me, so that my servant will be with me where I am; and my father will honour anyone who serves me” (John 12:26)

Discipleship:

Jesus wants those who desire to follow him as disciples to do service to all; the criterion for discipleship is serving one’s brethren and it is in this background, he has called upon those who desire to follow him to do service. Service has its glory in sacrificing self as we have already seen.

Cost of Discipleship:

Whenever Jesus teaches about discipleship, there is a stress on the importance of sacrificing self. “Whoever comes to me cannot be disciple unless he loves me more than he loves his father and his mother, his wife and his children, and himself as well. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14: 26, 27; Mark: 8:34). Jesus calls to discipleship “Come with me” (Mark 1:17; 2:14; 10:21;

Matthew 4:19; Luke 9:59; John 1:43). Answering his call, Simon and Andrew “left their nets and went with him” (Mark 1:18). James and John, sons of Zebedee “left their father in the boat and went with Jesus” (Mark 1:20). Our Lord insists that whoever is committing to his discipleship should give up whatever is causing obstructions to that. To enter into a deep feeling of discipleship, one has to have total submission of everything of his and then follow Jesus. One who awaits favourable circumstances and various calculations to match the situation, cannot become a disciple of Jesus (Luke 9: 57 – 62). Discipleship of Jesus doesn't offer any systematic pattern or goal in life or a thought process based on philosophical or ideological insights. As a disciple, on the one hand he experiences fellowship and friendship with Jesus and on the other hand, he has tribulations to confront, service to offer and sacrifice to perform.

Fullness of Discipleship:

The disciples of Jewish Rabbis complete their learning process and then become teachers of Law. They are never called disciples thereafter. But the disciples of Jesus are always disciples. They are in the process of growing to the fullness of discipleship. Disciples of Jesus should reflect service, tribulations and sacrifice in their nature. The cross of Jesus happens to be the test for discipleship. In the gospel according to St Luke, till the events in Gethsemane (22:45), the term “disciples” is used by St Luke; thereafter, the term used is “those with him” (22:49, 56, 58, 59). In 23:49, St Luke says, “those who knew Jesus”. Maybe St Luke is reluctant to call them disciples at this stage for the reason that they shied away from the passion of cross undergone by Jesus and stayed away from being at service to him as partners in his sufferings. Thereafter, the term “disciple” is used later in Acts 6:1 only. Here, disciples include not the twelve alone but all those who have been following Jesus. Resurrection and the coming of Holy Spirit totally

transformed the disciples. They became ready to pay the price of discipleship. Only then they experienced the essence of discipleship in its fullness. Thus they succeeded to follow Jesus Christ carrying his cross of rejection, passion and martyrdom, thus becoming his servants and disciples.

Questions:

1. Jesus is called 'servant of the servants'; what is the base for this?
2. What is the real service to be rendered to Jesus?
3. What was the price given by the disciples for the discipleship of Jesus?

Unit 2

May Your Glory be Revealed

Lesson 1

May I know You

Know Him; Experience Him # Know God Face to Face # Understand God in His Deeds # Understand

God in His fullness of Goodness # Those who Love
Know God # Wisdom of God and Ethics in Life#

Know Him; Experience Him:

The words 'knowledge' or 'wisdom' normally means intellectual knowledge. It is an accepted dogma that true knowledge has to be objective and shall not be subjective. To acquire objective knowledge, the person or object has to be observed from a distance without attempting to go close and establish any sort of deep relation or intimacy. For example, in a laboratory, two chemicals are made to react and the changes are observed to arrive at some inference. But there are no such tangible means to analyze subjective knowledge and therefore it lacks in reliability. Since Science is based on objectivity, that has been accepted as reliable whereas religion is being based on subjectivity, has not been accepted as that much reliable. However this tendency of knowledge being viewed in two different strata called objective and subjective, which between them are totally unrelated, has

been undergoing changes. Of late, this sort of classification of the two is accepted as incorrect even in the field of science. Thus, any knowledge is subjective as well as objective at the same time. For example, a rose flower appears to me as beautiful; is this knowledge objective or subjective? It is both. Knowledge, however objective may it be, contains an element of subjectivity also in it. In other words, any person who acquires knowledge establishes a relation with his object and knowledge emanates through this deep relation.

According to the Holy Bible, wisdom neither comes out of intellectual exercise nor is bifurcated as objective and subjective. Wisdom has to be experienced. The classic example given in Holy Bible to establish that wisdom is just not something intellectual but an experience in its full depth is the use of this very same word in man – woman relationship. In Genesis 4:1, 17, 19 Matthew 1:25 and Luke 1:34, the relation between man and woman is stated in Greek

original version as 'Ginosko' meaning 'know'. But in translations, there are different words used. The Hebrew equivalent 'yada' also means 'know'.

Knowledge of divinity does not come from a theoretical search or analysis about God's eternal essence or existence. Confront God and enter into that deep relation with Him; thus you experience God. You experience God in His redemption deeds in our universe. You experience God through a life following the will of God. You experience God by loving your brethren.

Know God Face to Face:

"The Lord would speak with Moses face to face, just as a man speaks with his friend" (Exodus 33:11). Moses could enter into such deep relation with Jehovah. The Lord said to Moses, "I will do just as you have asked, because I know you very well and I am pleased with you" (Exodus 33:17).

"No other prophet has ever done miracles and wonders like those that the Lord has sent Moses to perform -----"(Deuteronomy 34:11). Man

knowing God and God knowing man are mutually related. “I know you very well” (Exodus 33:17). At this command of God, Moses pleads, “Please let me see the dazzling light of your presence” (Exodus 33:18). And, God shows Moses his glory (Exodus 33: 19 – 23). Moses had his face shining with God’s glory (Exodus 34:29).’ Knowing God’ means confronting God and seeing God. In this background, ‘knowing God’ and ‘seeing God’ has the same meaning.

Understand God in His Deeds:

Man understands God through His redemption deeds in the universe. During their exodus, Israelites were suffering from hunger and Jehovah provided manna and quail with which they were content; they realised their Jehovah was taking care of them. “Tell them that at twilight they will have meat to eat, and in the morning all the bread they want, Then they will know that I, the Lord, am their God” (Exodus 16:12). The God whom we know interferes in our lives and redeems us. In the Old Testament, very often, the call to

understand God is to turn to Him who has been active in history. “You saw what he did to the king of Egypt and to his entire country. You saw how the Lord completely wiped out the Egyptian army, along with their horses and chariots, by drowning them in the Red Sea when they were pursuing you. You know what the Lord did for you in the desert before you arrived here. You know what he did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab of the tribe of Rueben. In the sight of everyone the earth opened up and swallowed them, along with their families, their tents and their servants and their animals. Yes, you are the ones who have seen all these great things that the Lord has done” (Deuteronomy 11: 3 -7). Moses asks the Israelites to obey such a God whom they know and discard those gods whom they do not know. God places two ways before Israelites; blessing and curse. If they obey their God whom they know, they would be blessed; if they obey those gods whom they do not know, they be cursed (Deuteronomy 11; 26 – 28).

In New Testament, God fulfils his acts of redemption through Jesus Christ. The world knows the union and fellowship Jesus has with Father through the works of Jesus. “You should at least believe my deeds, in order that you may know once and for all that the Father is in me and that I am in the Father” (John 10:38).

Understand God in His fullness of Goodness:

While trying to experience God, it is very important to confront and understand Him who is active interfering in history. But, this knowledge has to be shaped practically. The Holy Bible stresses this aspect frequently. The real evidence of being in the process of understanding God is a transformed life. Justice, equality, truth, holiness and love are virtues peculiar to one who understands God. God doesn't recognize those who are wayward, cheaters and untrue. “They are always ready to tell lies; dishonesty instead of truth rules the land. The Lord says my people do one evil thing after another, and do not acknowledge me as their God” (Jeremiah 9:3). The

community that retains justice and righteousness knows God; “He gave the poor a fair trial, and all went well with him. That is what it means to know the Lord” (Jeremiah 22:16). Wisdom of God is lightened only in lives filled with holiness. “Whoever continues to sin has never seen him or known him” (1 John 3:6). Prophet Isaiah foresees that the universe would be filled with divine wisdom with the coming of messiah and men would stay away from sin. “On Zion, God’s sacred hill, there will be nothing harmful or evil. The land would be as full of knowledge of the Lord as the seas are full of water” (Isaiah 11:9).

Those who Love Know God:

In the first epistle of St John, the most important practical facet of knowing God is love of brethren. Whoever loves his brethren knows God. Whoever doesn’t love his brethren doesn’t know God. “God is love” (1 John 4:7, 8), thus says St John forcibly. The essence of God’s commands is love. “If we obey God’s commands, then we are sure that we know him” (1 John 2:3).

Wisdom of God and Ethics in Life:

What we infer mainly from the above discussions is that divine wisdom and ethics in life are closely related to each other. We start knowing God closely when our life is growing up truthfully and filled in goodness. Our life will certainly be filled in goodness as we keep on closer to God. Knowing God really means understanding the will of God and acting accordingly. Jesus says that God is not honouring those who recite His name or those who claim to possess power of miracles and prophecy (Matthew 7: 21, 22). A tree has to be identified from its fruits (Matthew 7: 16 – 20). Those who do the will of God are honoured by God. Those who do not do the will of God are sinners and on the Day of Judgment, they would be told. “I never knew you; get away from me, you wicked people” (Matthew 7:23).

Questions:

1. What is meant by knowledge or wisdom in the Holy Bible?

2.Explain the ideas of knowing God and understanding God.

3.How do you put it into practice ‘knowing God’

Lesson 2

Those Pure in Heart Will See God

Preface # Inner eye and Outer eye # Seeing, yet, not seeing # Vision of God # Veil of Cloud and covered eyes #To find not to be seen # Vision of Christ and Vision of God # Seeing God in Love and Holiness

Preface:

The terms ‘to know’ and ‘to see’ carry similar meanings in Biblical contexts. On many occasions, the term ‘to see’ can be used to mean ‘to know’. In the last lesson, we have discussed that the word ‘know’ means ‘experiencing’ in the Bible. ‘To see’ doesn’t exclusively mean looking through eyes. Whatever one ‘experiences’ with external sense organs or with intellect or with mental faculty or spiritually are all said to be ‘seeing’. “We will never see sword or famine” (Jeremiah

5:12; 14:13); here, we shall understand that there would not be any war experiences. “He will not see prosperity” (Jeremiah 17:6); “my eyes will never see happiness again” (Job 7:7); “I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (Psalm 27:13): in all these verses, though ‘seeing’ prosperity or happiness or goodness is mentioned, what really means is experiencing them. “----- nor will you let your Holy One see decay” (Psalm 16:10) makes one experience decay. “Seeing death” in Psalm 89:48 indicates experience of death. Not only in Biblical expressions, but elsewhere also, these usages are not uncommon.

Inner eye and Outer eye:

Using outer eyes, one can see the world around us. But to know the divine mysteries or to experience divine visions or to visualize God, one’s inner eyes are to be opened. The servant of Prophet Elisha got terribly scared to see the army of Aram having surrounded the city; and Elisha says, “Don’t be afraid, those who are with us are

more than those who are with them” (2 Kings 6:16). What Elisha, the divine man could see there could not be seen by his servant. Then Elisha prayed, “O Lord, open his eyes so that he may see”. Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17). Here, the servant represents common men. He could not see anything beyond the usual world around him. But Elisha is one who has the insight to experience divine visions and redemption deeds of God who acts above the worldly systems and regulations. Hagar, while wandering in the desert of Beersheba felt too thirsty and there, provision of God was revealed to her; her eyes were opened; “Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water” (Genesis 21:19). Stephan, who was standing before the examination by Sanhedrin saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right of God (Acts 7:55). “As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the spirit descending on him

like a dove” (Mark 1:10). These visions were not visible to those who were standing nearby. The Bible is filled with many such visions. The interferences of God are not confined beyond the natural laws of this universe alone, but even seen straight in the world around us. He is active among us. But only those who have their inner eyes open can experience such interferences.

Seeing, yet, not seeing:

Those who see, yet do not, are seeing the redemption deeds of God with their outer eyes but inner eyes being closed cannot understand what they are seeing. The people of Israel having fallen to such a plight, Jehovah entrusts the mission of prophecy to Isaiah. “Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving” (Isaiah 6:9). The reason for their being retarded in mind and being blind in eyes is hardness of their hearts (Isaiah 6:10). Jesus sees

the Jews of his time in the very same manner. They do not have the insight to understand the meaning of the parable of the sower of seeds. But, Jesus makes his disciples understand the meaning of this parable and says, “But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear” (Matthew 13:16). On another occasion too, Jesus has commended on the spiritual blindness of Jewish community. The Jews see the one born blind being blessed with sight; but they are not prepared to accept it; they are not prepared to understand the grace of God showered there. They simply deny Jesus. Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains” (John 9: 41).

Vision of God:

Veil of Cloud and covered eyes: According to the Bible, vision of God is the noblest experience in spiritual life. Moses and Elijah are considered two persons of importance in the Old Testament having had this experience. However, once we

probe into the depth of the vision of God they had, we realise that they saw God behind a veil. On the Horeb Mountain, Jehovah appears to Moses in a burning bush; but Moses was scared to look at God and covers his face (Exodus 3:6). Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu along with seventy elders 'saw God' on Mount Sinai. The subsequent narrations reveal that what they saw was an enchanting light that was surrounding Jehovah below his feet (Exodus 24:10). The glory of Jehovah was there like a glowing fire on the mountain which Israelites could see standing at the valley (Exodus 24: 15 – 17). "But we read further that Moses moving closer to the presence of God; then Moses entered the cloud as he went up the mountain" (Exodus 24:18). After this, Moses prays to God for a deep experience of divine vision and Moses is allowed to see the glory of God (Exodus 33: 18 – 23).

Here, seeing God, seeing God's glory and seeing God's face are all having the same meaning. God placed Moses in the cleft of a rock and hid with

His hand till God's glory passed. Moses could see the glory of God from behind only as it was passing by. The vision of God to Prophet Elijah too was almost similar. On the Horeb Mountain, Elijah covers his face standing at the mouth of his cave and faces God (1 Kings 19:13). In the vision to Prophet Isaiah the seraphs appear to him with their face and legs covered with wings and singing praises to God (Isaiah 6:2). Though Isaiah says that he has seen God, what he has seen in reality is the glory that has been covering God (Isaiah 6:1). Indeed, Moses, Elijah and Isaiah have seen God. This is being stated affirmatively in Old Testament and New Testament. But God appears to men, but He covers their eyes. This is the reason why the glory of God and the darkness of Cloud are seen as part and parcel of vision of God in the Old Testament as well as in New Testament (Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10; Luke 9:34; Mark 13:26).

To find not to be seen: We have seen that Moses and Elijah, who are at the zenith of divine visions,

could face God only with their eyes covered or through a veil of cloud. The 'visionless' nature of this 'vision' is very crucial in the vision of God. This can be viewed in different angles. (a) "But you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:20). A God who is attainable cannot be a God. (b) "You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice" (Deuteronomy 4:12). God doesn't have a form to match the imagination of man, but there are occasions when He takes forms and reveal to man. The appearance to Abraham in the garden of Mamre is an example (Genesis 18). However, at the highest level of divine visions, God reveals Him formless. (c) With extremely shining light, normal vision is impossible; likewise, under the enchanting splendour of God's glory, the naked eyes turn blind.

As we know God closer and closer, it enriches us that God is unattainable to human intellect and human vision. Wisdom of God makes us realise that God cannot be perceived fully. Indeed, divine

vision enlightens us that God is beyond visions. Early fathers who have this experience call this a state of no wisdom.

Vision of Christ and Vision of God: When Philip asks, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us” (John 14:8); and Jesus replies, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Earlier, Jesus has stated, “When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me” (John 12:45). In the gospel according to St John, vision of Christ is the same as vision of God. The contrast that goes with the vision of God is very much present in the New Testament also just like we have in the Old Testament. On the one hand, it is said, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8) John proclaims repeatedly that “No one has ever seen God” (John 1:18; 6:46; 1 John 4:12). “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12).

Seeing God in Love and Holiness: In his first epistle, St John has connected love with divine

vision. Though God is invisible and unattainable, God lives in us when we are filled in love. “No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (1 John 4:12). “For anyone who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20).

Moses went up to see God in the burning bush and he was asked to remove his sandals which represented worldly filth (Exodus 3:5). When God appeared on Mount Sinai, people of Israel purified them and waited for the divine vision (Exodus 19:10). Writer of the epistles to Hebrews says, “Without holiness, no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). St John says, “No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him” (1 John 3:6). Purification leads one to God and simultaneously, divine vision leads one to more purification. Listen to what Isaiah laments after he had the vision of God: “Woe to me; I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among people of unclean lips, and my eyes have

seen the King, the Lord Almighty” (Isaiah 6:3). Only when you experience presence of God more often, you feel the need of being more and more pure. As you are more and more purified, your heart gains clarity and you experience vision of God. “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8)

Questions:

1. Who are those who see, but do not see?
2. Explain the vision of God Moses and Elijah had.
3. How God is revealed in love and holiness?

Lesson 3

Called to Freedom

Preface # Freedom from sin, law and death # Freedom in Christ and Holy Spirit # Freedom

evidenced in Love and Service # Freedom leading to the Glory of Eternity #

Preface:

One who enjoys freedom can plan his own programs. He has his own opinions and his own stands on various issues. He can act independently. A slave doesn't belong to himself. He has no sustenance of his person; he is forced to carry on as directed by an external force; his slavery may be to some political suzerainty, may be to some social masters, may be to evil powers; thus goes our views on freedom and slavery. Greek philosophy explains freedom as the capacity to possess realistic perceptions without lending ears to external forces of influence. A person who controls himself to be away from external influences and who exercises full authority over his mental faculties by suitably analysing frailties which would have come up, can be considered a seer. New Testament stresses that self control is very important to achieve true freedom. This principle is not something exclusive

for Christianity, but is very much accepted in all religions. But New Testament has highlighted two facets as basics for freedom. (1) The human race is under the authority of evil and Satan; so long man continues a slave of sin, he will not achieve real freedom by just withdrawing to himself and controlling his mental faculties. Christ has called us to a new status of freedom. He has given us the freedom of a new world through his life, death and resurrection, by redeeming us from the clutches of sin. (2) Not man alone is entering this experience of freedom; the entire creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:21).

Freedom from sin, law and death:

The concept of freedom in the New Testament is liberation from sin (Rom. 6: 18 – 23; 8: 31 – 36), liberation from law (Rom. 7: 3, 4; Gal. 4: 21 -31; 5: 1 - 13) and liberation from death (Rom. 6: 21, 22; 8:21).

The sin of each individual and his liberation is important in New Testament. However, individual sin is viewed looking into the universality of sin. Close to sin, there is death. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Thus, the entire human race became slaves to sin and death. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom.3:23). The death and resurrection of Christ redeemed men from being slaves to sin and death and made human race free, granting justification and eternal life.

Law is provided by God. "So then, law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12). "I found that the very commandment was intended to bring life-----; we know that the law is spiritual" (Rom. 7: 10, 14). Law pin points what is expected by God from man. But law is incapable of redeeming man from death and sin to provide life, because man is weak

in body. Law can only judge man as a sinner and pass ruling that he deserves death. He cannot be freed. Law can provide judgment for the external deeds of man; but law can neither control the movements of his heart nor transform him. Law commands not to kill and not to steal. But there is no law to check vengeance towards one's brother or to dilute one's thoughts of greed. Without being liberated from the internal influences of evil designs, man doesn't become free from sin. But he can behave fair before the society by taking care of his external deeds. Thus, law always carries with it the senselessness of self justification beautifully hidden inside. Because of these reasons, law is often called by St Paul as the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). He further calls law as the service of judgment and death (2 Cor. 3: 7 – 9). As such, the liberation provided by Christ is also freedom from law. Christ has provided us a creed which helps us to overcome external and internal forces of evil to achieve true freedom; this is the creed of the spirit of life. Christ set up

the service of Spirit that leads us to life and glory; this replaces the service of law that has been leading to judgment and death (2 Cor. 3: 6 – 11). St Paul teaches, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17).

Freedom in Christ and Holy Spirit:

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free” (Gal. 5:1). “We have freedom in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 2:4). Apart from what St Paul has said in these verses about the freedom that Jesus provides, St John quotes Jesus, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree” (Gal.3:13). This act of redemption of Christ is the base for our freedom. It is the Holy Spirit who fulfils the freedom in Christ. Law cannot liberate body from the slavery of sin. Holy Spirit living in us transforms us who are of the nature of body to the nature of Spirit. Therefore, we are now Spirit natured. “You, however, are

controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you” (Rom. 8:9).

We experience the freedom in Christ through Holy Mysteries of the Church. This is an act of Holy Spirit. The 6th chapter of the epistle to Romans is a treatise on Holy Baptism. During the service of Baptism, the one who gets baptised is briefed about his new position as we see in Rom. 6: 17, 18. St Paul says, if the one who is baptised lives according to what he is briefed here, he earns his freedom from sin.

The freedom of being a son is the most important factor of freedom in Christ. The Jews take pride by saying, “We are Abraham’s descendents and have never been slaves of anyone” (John 8:33). But Jesus tells them strongly, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (John 8:34). “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry your father’s desire” (John 8:44). But, “those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God’ (Rom. 8:14). “You received the Spirit of sonship and by him, we cry, Abba, Father”

(Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). “Now, if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co heirs with Christ” (Rom.8:17). Holy Spirit enables us to inherit the freedom and rights of sonship (Rom. 8: 14 – 17).

Freedom evidenced in Love and Service:

Freedom from sin is freedom from death. “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life” (Rom.6:22). The foundation and first fruit of this freedom and eternal life is resurrected Christ himself. Through Holy Mysteries, we participate in the resurrection of Christ and are freed from the slavery of decay and death to grow in the glory of resurrection. This freedom to glory is not for man alone; it is for the entire creation. The whole of creation is waiting patiently to join the children of God to share this great experience.

Questions:

1. Briefly explain what you understand by freedom from sin, law and death.
2. How do we make it experience in our life the freedom in Christ and in Holy Spirit?
3. How can we evidence freedom through love and service?

Lesson 4

Abundant Life

Preface # Life in Jesus Christ # Eternal Life #
Eternal Life in Old Testament and Jewish Texts #
Eternal Life in New Testament # The Bread
enduring to Eternity # Life and Glory # Life rising
from Sacrifice # Present experience and Future
Hope of Eternal Life #

Preface:

The life in Jesus Christ as mentioned in New Testament is not the life of nature. The life of nature is truly a great gift from God, no doubt. But

the life that we share in Christ is a gift from God that is too special for us that we have our share in God's life. Our share in this new life liberates us from the clashes we confront between life and death in our life of nature. The life of nature that is subject to decay and death is being decorated with imperishableness and immortality. Because of this, eternal life in New Testament has become a main topic of discussion in the works of St John. The term eternal life appears in New Testament on 135 occasions of which 66 are seen in the writings of St John. There are biblical scholars who attribute the term 'Gospel of Life' to the gospel according to St John. What St John himself says is worth noting in this context: "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

Life in Jesus Christ:

Life is engaged in Father and Son in the same manner. Father has life in Himself; likewise, Son too has life in himself. Christ is life itself (John 1:4;

5:26; 6:57; 1 John 1: 1, 2; 5: 11, 20). That life was light of men (John 1:4). It is also said, Christ is life (John 11:25; 14:6), bread of life (John 6:35, 480, living bread (John 6:51), light of life (John 8:12) and provider of water of life (John 4: 10, 11; 4:14). His words are Spirit and life (John 6:63), he has the words of eternal life (John 6:68), he came to this world to provide life (John 6:63; 10:10; 1 John 4:9), one who believes in Christ has eternal life; he has entered eternity from death (John 5:25; 1 John 3:14), he is the stream rising to eternal life (John 4:14) and he is the bread that endures to eternal life (John 6:27). St Paul too says on many occasions that one who believes in Christ has his life firmly rooted in Christ. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). We have the life of Jesus in us (2 Cor. 4: 10 -11). We live in Christ (Rom. 6:11). We live in him (2 Cor. 13:4). Our life is in Christ (Rom. 8:2).

The hope in the new life we find in Jesus has its foundation in the resurrection of Christ. The

resurrection of Christ points out that the human race is resurrected by God through Christ. Those who are dead resurrect into life; those who are subjected to death too would be sharing the life of resurrection in Jesus Christ.

Eternal Life:

Eternal Life in Old Testament and Jewish Texts:

The term 'life' is common in the Old Testament, but 'eternal life' is seen only once and that is in Daniel 12:2. "Multitude who sleeps in the dust of the earth will awake: some to the everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt". Here, eternal life is mentioned in relation with life after death. There is clear mention of life after death in 2 Maccabees 12: 34 -44 and in the Book of Wisdom 3: 2 – 4; 5:15. Though the books 1 & 2 Maccabees and the Book of Wisdom are not included in Bible Society versions, they are part of Holy Bible according to the Bible Canon of Orthodox Churches. These three books are written in the two centuries before Christ. It was during this period that specific thoughts on

eternal life, life after death and resurrection took firm roots in Jewish religious thoughts. The Qumran community who lived during the time of Christ believed that with the coming of messiah, New Jerusalem would be established on earth and those 'children of enlightenment' would experience the lasting joy of eternity. To them, this hope has not been for a future, but they have been claiming this as a current experience. Many of the writings of Jewish Rabies have been holding that eternal life differs from the life of earth. Life of this world would be temporary, but eternal life has no end. 'Apocalyptic writings' of Jews have stated not only that eternal life has no end, but the nature of that life itself is different and it is not a continuation of this worldly life. They have also said that it is the beginning of a new era. With the coming of messiah, this new era would commence in this world and men would make entry to eternal life. The thoughts we have in the New Testament on eternal life and eschatology stand quite close to Jewish 'apocalyptic writings'.

Eternal Life in New Testament: Eternal life differs from worldly life. The experience which overcomes physical death is eternal life. The true enemy of eternal life is sin and not death. “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever reject the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (John 3:36; 1 John 5:14). Eternal life is the life in coming age. This age has already commenced in Jesus Christ right now. Christ has not been teaching of a life to be realised in future. That life commences now in this world and looks forward to the coming age for fulfilment. Upon its fullness, physical death also disappears.

The Bread enduring to Eternity: Chapter 6 of the gospel according to St John is a lengthy exhortation on Holy Qurbana. Our Lord understood the expectations of the multitude of common people who have been curious after 5000 have been fed with five loaves. They expected easy food to satisfy their material needs. But our Lord corrects them. “Do not work for food

that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you” (John 6:27). In the desert, Israelites got Manna that was not providing eternal life. But the life providing bread that comes down from heaven is Christ. Christ gives himself to us during Holy Qurbana. Accepting his body and blood, we are entering eternal life. “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life” (John 6:54).

Life and Glory:

Life and Glory are experiences of Kingdom of God. Both these words are used in the same contexts. For example, in 1 Peter 5:4, it is stated, “crown of glory”. But in James 1:12 and Revelations 2:10, what is mentioned is “crown of life”. We can see the relationship between life and glory in 2 Cor. 3: 6 – 11. Law would have been lifeless. Service of law provides judgment and death. But Spirit provides life. The service of life providing Spirit gifts fascinating glory. John 1:4 says, “Life was the light of men”. Once we align our thought

processes in that line, glory of God can be understood as glittering of life.

Life rising from Sacrifice:

There is a common saying that life begins with sacrifice. “----- A grain of wheat falls to the ground and ----- if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24). Through this parable, Jesus is pointing to his death on cross. The death on cross and sacrifice leads to life of resurrection and glory. “The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:25). “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19:29). “We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. We who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal

body” (2 Cor. 4: 10 -11). St Paul says further, “-----
----- dying, and yet we live on” (2 Cor. 6:9).

Present experience and Future Hope of Eternal Life:

Resurrection that has overcome the death of Christ teaches us a very important lesson. Life that overcomes death has come in place at this point of history itself. At the same time, we are growing into the final resurrection where death vanishes. In other words, the life provided by Jesus is an experience of the present as also the hope for the days to come. Both these are appearing together throughout the New Testament. For example, see these verses in 1Timothy: “take hold of the eternal life” (6:12) and “----- as a firm foundation for the coming age ----- take hold of the life that is truly life” (6:19). Here the former verse indicates ‘present’ and the latter one, ‘future’. “----- Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life -----“(John 5:24). This is the present experience; those who have done good deeds are awaiting

resurrection to life. “Those who have done good deeds will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:29).

Questions:

1. In the light of New Testament, explain that our life exists in Jesus Christ.
2. Explain the Jewish background of the thought of eternal life appearing in New Testament.
3. How eternal life and Kingdom of God are mutually related?

Lesson 5

Lord, Save Us

Jehovah, Saves Israel # Jehovah, Redeemer of Israel # The people Earned by God # The term ‘saving’ in New Testament # Healing the Sick and Saving # Salvation from Sin # Salvation and Eternal Life # From the Wrath of God to Glory of God

Jehovah Saves Israel:

In the Old Testament, 'save' in its basic sense means 'bring to open space from distresses'. In other words, liberation to the openness of freedom from a situation of having subjected to torture or from being held captive is called salvation. The term 'save' in the Old Testament concept includes liberation from all sorts of individual, social, spiritual and material evil as also from external or internal evil forces or their influences.

Jehovah is the true saviour for Israel. Victories in battles are not won by soldiers, but by Jehovah, the liberator. "It was not by their swords that they won the land, nor did their arms bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm and the light of your face, for you loved them. You are my King and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob" (Psalms 44:2, 3). Before their enemies, they never looked for ways and means to save themselves, but wait patiently believing that Jehovah, the saviour would interfere. Isaiah

advises, “In repentance and rest is your salvation; in quietness and trust is your strength” (Isaiah 30:15). Turning back to history, one understands that Israel is a people who have been repeatedly saved by Jehovah (Deuteronomy 33:29). God saved them from Egypt and since then, God continued to save them from Gentiles and their kings (Exodus 15:2; Psalms 74:12; 106:10, 21; 1 Samuel 11:13; 14:23; 2 Samuel 8:6; 14). Jehovah’s act of salvation is not from wars alone; people of Israel are saved from diseases, from harmful situations, from unjustified assassinations, from unjustified imprisonments, from poverty, from persecutions, from death and from all bondages and calamities which place men in deep distresses. The main theme in all the Psalms are nothing other than these. ‘O Lord save us’ is a lamentation we hear in most of the Psalms (Psalms 12:1; 20:9; 28:9; 60:5; 86:16; 108:6; 109:26; 119:94).

Jehovah, Redeemer of Israel:

There was a system in force among brothers in Israel regarding redemption. “If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold” (Leviticus 25:25). Likewise, Jehovah redeems Israel whenever they are alienated. Jehovah who liberated Israelites from their bondage to Egypt is their redeemer (Exodus 6: 6, 7; Deuteronomy 7: 6 – 8; Psalms 43:1 – 7; 111:10). The prophets during the days of exile have been exhorting that they would be redeemed from their slavery in Babylon. “Your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 41:14; 43:14; 44:16; Psalms 19:14; 78:35). Again, prophets inform in advance that on Jehovah’s day, he would come as the redeemer of his people and liberate them from all their slavery (Isaiah 59:20; Psalms 130:7, 8; Hosea 13:14). New Testament shows this hope as being realised in Jesus Christ (Luke 2:38; Eph. 1:14; 4:30; 2 Peter 2:9).

Though New Testament doesn't define Christ as a redeemer directly, there are mentions here and there about the redemption we have in Jesus Christ. "In him we have redemption through his blood; the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rom. 3:24). St Paul ascertains that Christ, indeed is our redemption (1 Cor. 1:30).

The people Earned by God:

The thoughts 'God earns his people', 'owning up', 'purchasing on a price' etc are closely related to the idea 'God redeems His people'. Israel is a people whom God has earned by liberating them from the slavery of Egypt (Exodus 15:16). Thus, Israel has become God's asset from among all other people of this world (Exodus 19:5). It has to be noted here that God has earned Israel as His people by redeeming them.

St Paul says that Christians are bought on a price (1 Cor. 6:19; 7:22). Christ sacrificed his life on the cross to earn his people through deeds of redemption; those people are now called

Christians. Christ purchased us for a price from the curse of law and made us inherit the rights of sonship as stated by St Paul in his epistle to Galatians (3:13; 4:4).

The term 'saving' in New Testament:

The term 'saving' in New Testament points to spiritual saving. Occasionally, when material life is endangered, its liberation is also called 'saving'. For example, when the boat in which the twelve disciples were travelling was about to get drowned, they shouted, "Lord, save us"; again, while Peter who was walking on the sea started to drown he too shouted, "Lord, save me" (Matthew 8:25; 14:30; Acts 27:20, 31, 34). In the epistles of Paul, there are mentions of the word 'saving' in relation to the spiritual experiences gifted by God. Here, 'saving' is not confined to spirituality alone. It needs to be noted that in New Testament, 'saving' is not touching spirit alone, but it is connected with the liberation and integration of the whole personality of men.

Healing the Sick and Saving:

In synoptic gospels, the healing service of Jesus is presented in relation with 'saving'. We read on many occasions Christ saying as "Your faith has saved you" or "your faith has healed you" (Luke 7:50; 17:19; Mark 5:34; 10:52) after healing someone. This means that through healing the sick, our Lord has been giving not physical wellness alone, but sins are also forgiven. It is a truth that forgiveness of sin leads to healing from illness. For example, at Jericho, Jesus has told Bartimaeus just this much only; "Go, your faith has healed you" (Mark 10:52). As the next step of being saved, he is healed. The Jewish religion has been advocating the relation between sin and illness very strongly. Jesus too sees this as important. This shall not be misunderstood as sin makes one sick; illness and decay are both consequences of sin. This indicates man's sinful ways. To get physical wellness in its wholeness, saving from sins is necessary. St James also stresses this in his epistle. "Therefore confess

your sins and to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (5:16). Jesus says the same thing to both these women; when he forgives the sins of the woman who anointed him with costly perfume and after healing the woman suffering from persistent bleeding: “Your faith has healed you” (Luke 7:50; Mark 5:34).

Saving from sin:

The Jewish thoughts during the days of Jesus Christ did not see any importance to remission of sin in the process of salvation through Messiah. However, in New Testament, remission from is very important. In the song of glorification by Zechariah, we read, “----- you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins -----” (Luke 1: 76, 77). In Matthew 1: 21, while explaining the meaning of the word ‘Jesus’, remission of sin is highlighted. “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins”.

In this context the stress that is given in New Testament is worth noting. In Old Testament, political and material liberation is a very crucial aspect of salvation. But the redemption acts of Jesus Christ have no agenda in that direction. However, the community that is redeemed from sin through Jesus Christ and is experiencing salvation would be capable enough to transform and realign political and material facets in their fullness.

Salvation and Eternal Life:

Redemption of sin is not the only thing that we have with the salvation in Jesus Christ. Salvation is an entry into the Kingdom of God and is a right to eternal life. We can understand this aspect very clearly in that incident where a rich young man seeks from our Lord what he has to do to inherit eternal life (Mark 10: 17 – 27). Here, inheritance of eternal life (10:17), entrance to the Kingdom of God (10: 23 – 25) and salvation (10:26) are all used to mean the same idea.

From the wrath of God to the Glory of God:

St Paul sees two angles to the salvation we experience in Christ. Firstly salvation liberates one from the expected wrath of God (Rom. 5:9; 1 Cor. 3:15; 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:9). We experience this liberation on the day of final judgment. As God has justified and redeemed us from our sins, we are freed from the wrath of God right now (Rom. 5: 9, 10).

The status of a man who has not been saved is that he has fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3; 23). The one who is saved identifies himself with the image of Christ and earns glory. This is the second angle of salvation. In Rom. 28:30, St Paul says that this is the experience we have now. Let us look into what St Paul says in 2 Thess. 2: 14. "He called you to this through our gospel that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ". On another occasion, St Paul says that we have the fullness of this in the second coming of our

Lord: “----- Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Philippines 3: 20, 21).

Questions:

- 1.How the Israelites did experience Jehovah as their redeemer?
- 2.What is the relation between healing of the sick and redemption?
- 3.Explain how is salvation pictured as the path transforming wrath of God to the glory of God?

Lesson 6

Peace unto You

#Greetings of Peace # Shalom # Lord of Peace # Christ, our Peace # Salvation and Peace # Holiness and Peace # Peace and justice #

Greetings of Peace:

During the days of Jesus Christ, Jews used to greet one another saying, 'peace unto you'. Even today, Jews and Arabs use this verse for conveying greetings. In the Old Testament, we have come across instances of people enquiring 'are you fine' when they meet (Genesis 29:6; 43:27; 2 Samuel 18:29; 20:9). When the angel Gabriel appeared before Virgin Mary, he greeted her, "Peace be with you" (Luke 1:28). After resurrection, when he met his disciples, Jesus greeted them, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19, 21, 26). This greeting verse is not just greeting alone, but conveys that the proclamation of the birth of Christ, the Messiah is indeed the message of salvation providing peace to all. The resurrected Christ gives to the world that peace which overcomes fear of death. The greetings of St Paul which we read at the commencement of each of his epistles reflect the

verses of peace of Christ as if echoing into our ears (Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 1:3 and so on).

Shalom:

In Greek language, 'peace' denotes a situation of the end of war reflecting calmness throughout. Shalom is a Hebrew word whose root meaning is wellness or prosperity. In the Old Testament, material prosperity is important as a common meaning. This word is also quite often used to mean physical wellness (Psalms 38:3; 73:3; Jer. 6:14; Is. 57:18, 19). A nation or a community living in peace and tranquillity is 'shalom' (2 Kings 20:19; 2 Sam. 17:3; 1 Kings 2:5). 'Shalom' also has a meaning 'salvation' (Lev. 25:6). 'Shalom' carries the meanings wellness, prosperity, goodness, providential protection and so on. Though New Testament is written in Greek, we see the very same meanings for 'shalom' as with the Hebrew root.

In the Bible, particularly in Old Testament, peace is not an individual feeling; it is seen as an

experience of the nation or a community. Physical wellbeing and internal calmness are part and parcel of 'peace'. Peace has its impact on internal and external, spiritual and material life of a man in its wholeness. Any community that experiences providential salvation in its fullest depth would be at peace always in all facets of life.

Lord of Peace:

The people of Israel were looking forward to the interference of God in history to establish eternal peace. In all the prophetic books, the hope that God would carry out this through His anointed one has been prevalent. The anointed one of God would be called 'Lord of Peace'; his peace sees no end; thus goes prophecies by Isaiah (Is. 9:6, 7). The anointed one of God is one who establishes peace and sustains it forever. Zechariah 9:9, 10 pictures the anointed one coming as King atop a donkey. A horse symbolises might and war whereas a donkey symbolises humility and peace. Prophet Zechariah sees the anointed one not as war hero wearing armour and accoutrements, but

as one who is a man of just, one who is victorious and as one who is humility personified. He will take out war and military preparations to proclaim peace to gentiles. Micah says, “And he will be their peace” (5:5). The prophet reiterates the hope that the anointed one would establish peace.

Christ, our Peace:

“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility” (Eph. 2:14 – 17). Christ unified people as one, hitherto, standing as two namely Greek and Jew. The law, that was the reason for such separation was removed and established peace by demolishing the wall of separation between them. The animosity among men ended and humankind

is reborn as one new man in Christ. The peace established here by Christ is not between men alone, but is peace between God and man also. Christ unified both in his flesh and reconciled with God. Thus, he preached the good news to gentiles as also to Jews in the same spirit (Eph. 2:13, 17). May be, here, the peace man has with God is not too clear; but this is very specifically explained in Rom. 5:1. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". He points out how we could access to this peace. By the death of His son, we reconciled with God. Peace shall not be limited to a relation between man and God; beyond that, peace is man's entry to the presence of God and our nearness to Him.

Salvation and Peace:

The salvation from God itself is divine peace."I will grant peace in the land" (Lev. 26:6). Thus says Jehovah to Israelites implying a meaning that they would be protected from wild animals and enemies in Canaan. Zechariah's song of

glorification contains this: “----- the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace” (Luke 1:79). Here, the path of peace is salvation from God. In Luke 2:14, we read, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favour rests”. This song of angels is nothing but the good news that salvation is in the world through Christ. Bible contains lots of example like these to show that salvation and peace move hand in hand.

After healing the bleeding woman and forgiving sins of the woman from her sins, Jesus says the same: “Go in peace” (Mark 5; 34; Luke 7:50). Peace is comprehensive salvation of man; the peace from Christ saves man in its wholeness; his body, his spirit and his whole personality are saved.

Holiness and Peace:

Holiness within oneself is very crucial for his peace in its true sense. “----- dear friends,

make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. ----- Our Lord's patience means salvation-----“(2 Peter 3:14, 15). In the epistle to Hebrews, it is stated that the God of peace through the blood of eternal covenant, brought back from dead our Lord Jesus Christ to equip us with everything good for doing his will (13:20). “May the God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Thess. 5:23).

Peace and justice:

Peace apart from an internal experience of divine salvation is also a social system. Justice is something that cannot be ignored while thinking about peace. The vision of psalmist about the promised land of God is relevant here. “Love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will embrace” (Psalm 85:10). Along with this, the vision of Isaiah about the new city of God is also worth noting. “Your rulers will no longer oppress

you; I will make them rule with justice and peace” (Isaiah 60:17). The enemy of peace need not be from outside the community; the injustice, inequality and intolerance within the community also disturb its peace. Peace can be re established in a community only if the systems got rotten by evil designs are eradicated and turn to goodness and truthfulness. St James says how justice and peace are related: “Peace makers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness” (St James 3:18).

Questions:

1. What is meant by ‘shalom’ in Old Testament?
2. How does St Paul explain Christ as our peace?
3. Explain the relationship between peace and justice.

Unit 3

Believe, and see the Glory of God

Lesson 1

Justified in Christ

God justifies a repenting sinner # Justification in Law # there is no one who is just # we are justified in Christ # Faith and Justification

God justifies a repenting sinner:

Let us have a look at the metaphor recorded in Luke 18: 9 – 14. The preface of this metaphor says that this addresses those who consider themselves justified denouncing their brethren with impudence. Two men go to the temple to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee has been observing Law literally to its core and is proud of it. His heart is full of arrogance; justifying himself he stands in the front row of the temple and prays. The tax collector is one who engages himself to collect taxes from the public excessively and wrongfully at the behest of the Roman government. Filled with guilty conscience, he cannot raise his head up to the heaven; bowing down, he prays

standing at a far corner of the temple. The prayer of the Pharisee goes like this; “I thank you, God, that I am not greedy, dishonest or an adulterer, like everybody else; I thank you that I am not like that tax collector over there; I fast two days a week and give you a tenth of all my income”. But the tax collector was down with feeling of guilt and repentance; his heart broken down; beating his chest, he prayed: “God, have pity on me, a sinner”. The tax collector went home justified.

Here we can see that certain basic errors have got mingled with the spirituality of the Pharisee. Firstly, he doesn't possess a basic conviction that the grace of God is that which sustains men in justice. In spiritual life, one should always accept that there is a possibility of one always falling to the evil prevalent everywhere around us. One who immerses deep into spirituality realises what is spiritual warfare and how strong that would be. He learns from experience that the grace of God alone helps him overcome such challenges of this world. One convinced of this would remain

humble and be reliant on God. The Pharisee didn't possess these virtues. Secondly, the one who lives in total submission to the Law is indeed justified by law; but such spirituality stands peripherally. It doesn't transform the heart. The heart that moves to God in its inner essence is one possessing humility, repentance and reliance in God. It is because of this our Lord says, "I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts" (Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32; Matthew 9:13). He says further, "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety nine respectable people who do not need to repent" (Luke 15: 7). The Law and its observance don't make one truly justified. Whoever approaches God in total reliance on him with repentance and humility in his heart is accepted by God as justified. Law and observance thereof should flow as the good fruits of this experience of justification by God.

Justification in Law:

The Pharisee we have seen in the above metaphor represents the Jewish religion of those days. Look at these questions: how to get justified? How to become a justified person? A Jew living during the days of Jesus would spontaneously answer this: 'by observing the Law'. But Jesus has corrected them. St Paul too discusses these at length in his epistles to Romans and Galatians. He says repeatedly that we are justified not by Law, but God justifies us through our faith (Rom.3; 24).

Mainly, the five books of Moses are the Law. Apart from these books, whatever has been received through other Old Testament books as also oral and written traditions are all included in Law. The chief religious text of Jews is 'Mishna' compiled from all these. This book is divided into six sections. They are: (1) the laws regarding share to be given to the priests and the poor from agricultural produce (2) the order prescribed for Jews as to the observance of feasts and festivals (3) laws regarding women (4) the rights of Sabbath and procedures of law thereof (5)

regulations on handling articles of the temple (6) laws of being purified. Jews believe that while Moses received those plates containing Ten Commandments from Jehovah atop Mount Sinai, he also received a series of other laws orally which gradually got compiled as what is seen in Mishna.

Any Jew who would like to be called a just man has to follow these Laws in its true essence. He will be rewarded when he observes each of these Laws. Those who observe more of the Laws will be rewarded more; he has greater chances to become a just man. The justification on the final Day of Judgment is decided weighing his rewards earned through observance of Laws and his breaking of Laws.

There is no one who is just:

“There is no one who is righteous” (Rom. 3:10). This statement of St Paul is something that shakes off Jewish faith totally. The Jew who follows Law and the Gentile to whom Law doesn't apply are

sinner before God in the same measure; they are far away from the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Law cannot justify man. There are two reasons for this; one, no man can satisfy all requirements of Law; what comes out of Law is convincing man that he has not come up to the expectations of God. Jesus Christ through his teachings points out the second limitation of Law; Law can justify only the external features of a man. It cannot look into the feelings one's heart is leaning to as well as his mental thoughts. There is a law, "Thou shalt not kill". But Law is helpless against one who possesses in his heart those feelings of arrogance and hatred towards his fellow brethren. In short, purely based on the Law, one cannot be called righteous or just.

We are justified in Christ:

The love of God did not let destruction of mankind happen that was subject to the wrath of God and death be it a Jew or a Gentile. God sent his begotten son to this world to lead men to the path of righteousness. A new mankind is growing

to full glory of God in Jesus Christ. “And so those whom God set apart, he called; and those he called, he put right with himself, and he shared his glory with them” (Rom. 8:30). Law is not strong enough to make any one just. But those of us who are in fellowship with Christ have share in his justice. The justice from Christ is present in the Church that is his body. It is the Holy Spirit who keeps us in fellowship with Christ and enables us to share his justice.

Faith and Justification:

St Paul repeatedly says, justification comes through faith and not through the acts of Law (Rom. 3:4; Gal. 2:3). In its truth, the relation Israel had with God in Old Testament is not as per Law. It turned out so in the course of time. Israel had experienced unlimited grace of God and they used to express their gratitude by worshipping God, by offering thanks - giving Psalms and hymns and expressing their joy in the grace of God. God gave them the Law as He loved them and wanted them to walk the straight path. These Laws insist that

they hold on to total faith and reliance in God and accept him as their Lord subjecting to Him wholly; such people obey these Laws. Those who were not bothered to fall in line with these Laws saw them irrelevant. St Paul never discarded the Mosaic Laws. Instead, he was pointing out the distortions of practicing Laws and the decay in observing religious rituals; he was proclaiming to the world the formulation of a new mankind growing up to God's righteousness in Jesus Christ.

There are Christians who interpret that through faith men are justified and that acts have no role. They have Rom. 3:27 as the source for this. But St Paul has never meant any sort of a contrast between acts and faith. What he teaches is that God doesn't accept acts those have no faith behind them. True faith is reflected through acts. It is in this backdrop, St James says, "It is by his actions that a person is put right with God, and not by his faith alone" (James 2:24). Some may feel it a bit contrasting, but what St Paul teaches are the same as St James.

Questions:

- 1.Explain that God justifies a repenting sinner.
- 2.What was the faith of Jews regarding justification through Law?
- 3.Explain the relation between faith and justification.

Lesson 2

My Grace Sufficient for You

Preface # Crisis of Jewish religion # The Grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ #The Generous Grace of God # Grace and Freedom # God's Grace in Abundance

Preface:

Whatever be the gravity of your sins, God showers His Grace on you in abundance without looking to your sins or shortcomings and without

any pre conditions. This is the essence of good news of Christianity. Grace of God is a subject that is discussed elaborately in the Old Testament, but its meaning gets revealed in totality only in the New Testament. The Grace that gets revealed in Jesus Christ and its meaning and relevance is discussed by St Paul in the New Testament in all detail. The teachings about Grace of God that is reflected in the Christian faith can be said to be the contributions of St Paul.

Crisis of Jewish religion:

What keeps Christianity distinct from Jewish religion is the importance the former attaches to Grace of God. St Paul who was a Pharisee and a Jewish Rabbi could see this difference quite specifically. He sees a spiritual crisis in Jewish religion. For Jews, the fullness of spiritual life comes with observance of Law. Their life has been Law centred. But as we have seen in the previous lesson, Law cannot transform life. What Law can do at best is to provide guidelines to life. Not only that, nobody can observe Law in its totality

without lacunae. Thus, man always remains punishable before Law. Law serves the purpose of branding man as a sinner condemned to death retaining him as one accursed always; if so, where do you have the hope of redemption? It is in the midst of this crisis, the Grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ has become meaningful and relevant. The Good News of Christianity is the message of Divine Grace being showered by God on human race. God has come down to visit his people as He has an abundance of mercy; He provides us redemption and forgiveness of sins absolutely free; this is in short, the sum and substance of Good News.

The Grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ:

According to what St Paul observes, Grace of God is Grace revealed through Jesus Christ. As such he uses the term 'Grace of Lord Jesus Christ' more often than 'Grace of God'. Look at the benediction in the name of Holy Spirit (12 Cor. 13:14); here, 'Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ' is specified. The usage 'Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ' can be seen

in many places like Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 16:23; Gal. 6:18; Philippians 4:23 as greetings towards the last part of certain epistles. Similarly, the greetings at the commencement of epistles often carry the usage, 'Grace and peace to you from God, our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ', for example, Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3, 4; and so on. The source of Grace is God; but, Grace flows to men through Jesus Christ.

The incarnation of Christ, his death and resurrection are all revelations of God's Grace. "You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; rich as he was, he made himself poor for your sake, in order to make you rich by means of his poverty" (2 Cor. 8:9) is what St Paul says. It is because of God's great Grace that Christ came down as one among men who are all sinners. This has not happened as man deserved it, but being underserved for this, God shows his great Grace revealing it in Jesus Christ.

The Generous Grace of God:

Grace of God is not a reward for our virtues or good deeds; this is something showered free from God in our unworthiness. God looks to us ignoring our inequities and accepts us as righteous. This is the Grace from God. St Paul teaches, “But by the free gift of God’s Grace, all are put right with Him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free” (Rom. 3:24).

The Jews who were contemporaries to St Paul used to believe that man would be justified by observing the Law. But St Paul understood the meaninglessness of this; nobody can satisfy the will of God by own efforts. Not only that, if God accounts for the inequities in one’s life, who can stand as righteous before God? Only the Grace of God can make us righteous. See what St Paul says, “It is by God’s Grace, you have been saved” (Eph. 2:5, 8); “By the free gift of God’s Grace, all are put right with Him through Jesus Christ” (Rom. 3:24); on both these occasions, St Paul means the same. Grace of God is a free gift and an overflowing gift (Rom 4:4; 5:16; 2 Cor. 9:15; 4:15; Eph. 3:7; 4:7).

Grace and Freedom:

There are certain Christian teachers who advocate a view that God has pre determined selected people to whom flow the Grace uninterrupted which cannot be denied or discarded by man. This view doesn't have any role for freedom of man. According to this, Grace of God is flowing to men mechanically. But St Paul teaches that man can deny and nullify Grace. He exhorts the Church of Corinth: "We beg you who have received God's Grace not to let it be wasted" (2 Cor. 6:1). He reminds the Galatians' Church, "Those of you who try to be put right with God by obeying the Law have cut yourself off from Christ; you are outside God's Grace" (Gal. 5:4). God's Grace is not to dilute man's willpower or discourage one's independent sense of responsibility. Those who submit totally to God of their own will and rely on Him alone receive this gift of Grace from God. The inner thirst for this Grace itself comes from the presence of Holy Spirit and as a sequel to God's Grace. The question as to whether free will of

man acts first or Grace of God acts first is irrelevant. Both these work in harmony.

“Where sin increased, God’s Grace increased much more” (Rom. 5:20). When St Paul says this, there is chance to misunderstand that Grace works among men mechanically. As such, St Paul himself clarifies, “What shall we say, then? Should we continue to live in sin so that God’s Grace will increase? Certainly not” (Rom.6:1). St Paul exhorts us that God showering Grace on a sinner is not to mean that he shall continue in sin that God will help him by Grace. God accepts a sinner by His abundant Grace and joins with Christ transforming him as a new man. Now, he should not return to sin.

God’s Grace in Abundance:

Christ has given metaphors and teachings on many occasions expressing abundance of Grace from God. May be, the word ‘Grace’ is not always used, but the idea gets clarified. The father accepting the prodigal son back to his home out

of his grace unconditionally is a classic example of God's Grace showered on those sinners coming back repented (Luke 15: 11 – 24). The tax collector has nothing to place before God as his claims; he totally submits him before the mercy of God and God accepts him as righteous (Luke 18:14). Labourers at the wine yard are paid wages beyond the normal justice of this world; this is provision of Grace in its abundance and God's nature too is no different (Matthew 20: 1-15). Our Lord is merciful to the ungrateful and the wicked as well (Luke 6:35); he gives us more than what we deserve for his generous helping is poured into our hands more than it can hold (Luke 6:38). Indeed, what we see on the cross is the concreteness of this Grace in abundance. "My Grace is sufficient for you". When Jesus says this to St Paul in his tribulations, surely, this is meant for each one of us in our sufferings too; this is the covenant of providential protection.

Questions:

1. Explain the crisis of Jewish religion and the solution revealed in Christ.
2. Convince from the teachings of St Paul that the Grace of God is free gift.
3. What are the teachings and metaphors of Christ expressing the abundance of God's Grace.

Lesson 3

Believe in God, and in Me

Abraham – a great model of faith # Reliance in God and Fear of God # Faith that doesn't waver # Jesus, the centre point of Faith # Faith and Deeds of law # Faith and Action

Abraham – a great model of faith:

Abraham is the great model of faith in the Old Testament. According to St Paul, Abraham is the father of the whole creation, not of Israel alone. It

is said about his faith, “Abraham believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6); this happened before the system of circumcision came into force to earmark a chosen people of God and therefore Abraham happens to be father for all. Based on this, St Paul teaches that Abraham is father for all whether there is circumcision or not. Romans 4: 9 – 13 explains this clearly.

God appeared to Abraham in Haran and commanded, “Leave your country, your relatives, and your father’s home, and go to a land that I am going to show you” (Genesis 12:1). Abraham obeyed in its fullness. The epistle to Hebrews says in 11:8, “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though, he did not know where he was going”. God’s call to Canaan was one of uncertainty to Abraham. This was the first occasion where Abraham experienced the meaning of faith in God. Later, despite God’s promise that his clan would be made to enlarge

through his son Isaac, Abraham accepts the command of God to offer that very son as a sacrifice; the bold moves of Abraham climbing the Mount Moriah has the strongest stamping of faith in the whole of Holy Bible. Abraham experiences the mysteries of faith standing in the midst of deepest of uncertainties at their pinnacle by relying on his God absolute to its zenith thereby enjoying the divine presence.

One, who sets his path in submission to the Word of God and obeying it, has bitter reverses waiting as he moves on. But there is the divine experience strengthening one who has total reliance on God. This is the only way one can realise the meaning of faith.

Reliance in God and Fear of God:

Particularly in the Old Testament, as also elsewhere in the Bible, the meaning of 'faith' is illustrated through 'reliance in God' and 'fear of God'. These two are found mutually accommodative throughout the Bible. See the

verse Psalm 115:11, “You who fear Him, trust in the Lord - He is their trust and shield”. Very often, ‘one who fear God’ is translated as ‘a devotee of God’ (Psalm 66:16; Proverbs 1:7) Job 4:6 says, “Should your piety be your confidence and your blameless ways your hope?” The faith in God takes deep roots through reliance in God and fear of God.

Throughout the Old Testament, we have exhortations to rely on God totally. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart” (Proverbs 3:5). This means one has to find our source of protection and our reliance in God and make total submission to Him alone. Old Testament qualifies those who seek ways of God and walks through as those who fear God. A very crucial facet of faith in God is fear of God. These have been used separately very often to carry the same meaning. As commanded by God, Abraham prepares for sacrificing his son and the angel says, “Now I know that you fear God” (Genesis 22:12). The sons of Israel crossed the Red Sea and the Egyptians got

drowned there; seeing these great deeds of God, it is recorded, “And when the Israelites saw the great power of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in Him and in Moses, his servant” (Exodus 14:31). Thus faith can be said to be relying in God who does great things by constantly interfering in the life of men.

Faith that doesn't waver:

In Hebrew language, the term ‘having faith’ has meanings such as ‘be firm’ and ‘be steady’. One can understand this concept by looking at a tree that has its roots deep down the earth and standing steady and firm without breaking off even in the severest of adversities. As the days of crucifixion have been nearing, the disciples being uncertain have looked like shaken out of anxiety and mental disturbances. Christ advises them to rely on God as well as on him that they stand strong and firm; “Do not let your hearts be troubled; trust in God; trust also in me” (John 14:1).

Prophet Isaiah in his book has been stressing on this concept imbedded in faith very strongly. He exhorts that in our calamities and external threats, we have to keep ourselves firmly in our faith in Jehovah. He says this in the backdrop of two historical events. Judea was attacked by Israel and Syria jointly in BC 734 and by Assyria in BC 701. The rulers of Judea were totally perturbed. Instead of turning to God, they resorted to short cut methodologies like depending on the Egyptian army to overcome the enemies. People hurried to leave Judea and take refuge in Egypt and other neighbouring countries. Isaiah at this stage advises them that their life wouldn't be safe unless they have their reliance on Jehovah. "If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all" (Isaiah 7:9). He tells them further that if their faith is in Jehovah, they wouldn't run away, but stand firm. "The one who trusts will never be dismayed" (Isaiah 28:16). Whatever be the circumstances, the Jewish people shall have their political governance emanating from their

faith and reliance in Jehovah. Of these, the prophecy of the birth of Immanuel comes during the first of the above two calamities. “The virgin will be with the child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel. ----- The mighty flood waters of the River will overflow all its channels; ----- its out spread wings will cover the breadth of your land, O Immanuel. ----- Prepare for battle and be shattered; ----- propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us” (Isaiah 7:14; 8:7 – 9). Whoever has faith in Jehovah has peace and steadiness. He never wavers in his thoughts or actions. He is strong and courageous as he is ruled by the faith that God is on his side as his protector. As such, Isaiah again exhorts people, “In repentance and rest is your salvation; in quietness and trust is your strength” (Isaiah 30:15).

Jesus, the centre point of Faith:

God sent his begotten son to this world to redeem people who have fallen in sin without distinguishing them as Jew or Gentile and to guide

them to righteousness and salvation. The nature of God, righteousness, is revealed in Christ sufficient for man to experience it (Rom. 3:21, 25). This is revealed even this day so that the present day men too could experience it (Rom. 1:17). The righteousness and salvation we receive from God through Jesus Christ is a free gift of grace. Men who are relying on God wholly and trust Him fully get into a new life in Christ and they have righteousness and salvation. This is not being given to man out of the fullness of his deeds; this not given to man because he deserves it; this gets into him through faith and reliance in God. This vision on faith is an important factor that distinguishes Christianity from Jewish religion.

Faith and Deeds of law:

There occurred a substantial variation to the faith in God within the Jewish religion two centuries prior to Christ. During the days of Old Testament, faith was mostly based on the interferences God was having in the history of universe and the deeds of God towards leading man to redemption

as well as the participation of man in this process. But, the two centuries before Christ saw a drastic change that faith got centred on the written Law. Faith drifted from the reliance on living God to ritualistic deeds laid down in the Laws. St Paul points out this variation as between deeds and faith in Rom. 3:27 and between grace and actions in Rom. 11:6. The contrast St Paul sees here must be understood in that above explained backdrop. In both these verses, what is meant by deeds or actions is the rituals laid down in the Law (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; 3:5, 10).

Faith and Action:

The epistle of St James stresses that one cannot discriminate action from faith or faith from action as we read in James 2: 14 – 26. It needs to be taken care that the meaning for action St James has is different from what St Paul has for the same word. Faith always has a concept of action with it. The faith we have in God is associated with God's love to man and this is a very important conceptualization of action linked with

faith. One who has no concern for the material needs of the poor and downtrodden cannot be said to have faith in God in its true sense. The reason is faith sans action is lifeless and fruitless (2:17, 20 and 26). See this verse; “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the Law” (Rom. 3:28). Whereas St Paul says so, what we have in the epistle of St James seems to be contradictory as, “A person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone” (James 2:24). But what St James does here is correcting the teachings of a new spirituality that has developed by misinterpreting the words of St Paul and thereby neglecting the responsibilities to the poor. Any community not bothered about their commitment to the downtrodden and the poor can never claim that they have faith in God.

Questions:

1. Reliance in God and fear of God are two important factors of faith; explain.
2. How can faith be sustained without wavering?

3. How can we reconcile the views of St Paul and St James regarding the relationship between faith and action?

Lesson 4

Rejoice in Hope

Wait for the Unseen # Hoping against Hope # Love, Faith and Hope # Christ is our Hope # Hope in Resurrection # Hope in the Glory of God # We have made entry into Hope # Hope that gets revealed in Tribulations

Wait for the Unseen:

Our hope rests with the call from God and His promise. We are yet to reach the final goal behind our call. We haven't even attained the fullness of the inheritance promised by Him. As of now, we are slowly progressing towards the goal. We are in the process of growing towards our rights of inheritance in its totality. We have, therefore, a hope beyond what we see around us now; we are waiting for that. Listen to what St Paul says, "For it was by hope we were saved; but if we see what

we hope for, then it is not really hope. For who hopes for something he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (Rom. 8:24, 25; 2 Cor. 4:18).

Hoping against Hope:

When Abraham was 99, he was promised: “I promise that you will be the ancestor to many nations” (Genesis 17:4). Age had made his body weak and his wife Sarah had her womb lifeless. But Abraham believed and ‘hoped against hope’ that the promise from God would be realized. St Paul records, “Abraham believed and hoped, even when there was no reason for hoping. -----
----- . He was absolutely sure that God would be able to do what he had promised” (Rom. 4: 18, 21). Abraham had faith in God to such an extent that God creates life from emptiness and acts miraculously to raise new hopes in situations of improbabilities and impossibilities. Abraham had his hope pinned on such a faith in God and his staunch conviction that God loved him.

Love, Faith and Hope:

Wait for the things not yet revealed; look forward to impossibilities turning possibilities. These are two of the most important factors contained in our hope in God. But how do we wait for the things which are not yet revealed? How can we keep our hope in impossibilities? We can hold tightly on our hope in God provided we experience the love of God who makes promises to us and we experience in life the meaningfulness of our reliance and faith in Him. Faith comes from love and hope comes from faith. The hope that grows in us strongly enhances within us our reliance and faith in God; consequently, we are filled with our love in God. The spiritual life gets enlightened by this cyclic transformation from one to another and their mutual complementation. We have seen very often St Paul preaches correlating these three virtues. Refer Rom. 5:1 – 5; 1 Cor. 13; Eph. 4: 1 – 6; Thess. 1:1; 5:8.

Christ is our Hope:

The base and the goal of our hope is the Kingdom of God which is a promise of God as also a gift from Him. This hope gets fully satisfied in Jesus Christ. People were hoping and waiting for long for a redeemer and they were answered as God became man in Jesus Christ and he initiated acts of redemption. The Jews had strong hopes that the anointed one from God called Messiah would redeem Israel. The disciples followed Jesus with this hope (Luke 24:21). And it was because of this reason that they got weakened as Christ was crucified. But the resurrection rekindled and strengthened their hope. St Paul argues that resurrection of Christ from the dead is the completion of the hope held by Israel (Acts 24:15). "And now I stand here to be tried because of the hope I have in the promise that God made to our ancestors; -----" (Acts 26: 6 – 8). This is what St Paul presents before the King Agrippa.

The hope in the promise of inheritance God gives through Jesus Christ is not exclusively for Jews.

The Gentiles who were once alienated from this hope have now become eligible through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:12). Without any difference as Jew or Gentile, the whole mankind are united in the hope of redemption in Jesus Christ. Thus, St Paul says, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called you" (Eph. 4:4)

Hope in Resurrection:

There are many references in New Testament regarding the contents of our hope. The essence of our hope in Christ is that all of us are partakers in his resurrection (1 Cor. 15; 1 Thess. 4: 13, 14). This is an aspect where Christians distinguish themselves from other religions. "Those who have died believing in Christ will rise to life first; then we who are living at that time will be gathered up along with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). St Paul reminds us that since we have this hope, we should not feel sad like others thinking about those departed from us (1 Thess. 4:13).

Hope in the Glory of God:

Hope in the glory of God comes close in line with the hope in resurrection. In a sense, resurrection is same as glorification. St Paul says, “And so we boast of the hope we have sharing God’s glory” (Rom. 5:2). At the second coming of Christ, we would be transformed and would be glorified in resurrection (1 Cor. 15:43). St Paul attempts to explain the hope of glorification in many ways like glorification as freedom for children of God (Rom. 8:21), redemption of body (Rom. 8:23), transformation to the likeness of God (2 Cor. 3: 12 – 18) and so on. Because of these, St Paul calls Christ as ‘Christ, the hope of glorification’ (Col. 1:27).

Lazarus rising from dead is different from the resurrection we have at the end. But that incident points to the hope of resurrection. Our Lord has told Martha before rising Lazarus, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even if he dies” (John 11:25). Martha was wavering still and he adds, “You would see God’s

glory if you believed” (John 11:40). This verse’s relevance is not confined to Lazarus’s resurrection alone, but it is a promise of hope from our Lord to all departed and those subject to death belonging to the entire mankind.

We have made entry into Hope:

The first epistle of St Peter carries thoughts of hope through its entire text. As such this epistle is quite often called, ‘epistle of hope’. A very striking thought we have here is Holy Baptism as being born again with hope in Christ (1 Peter 1: 3, 5). Therefore, we have to place our hope in its wholeness for the forthcoming grace (1:13). The basis of our hope and its certainty comes from the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Because of this, St Peter qualifies this hope as ‘living hope’ (1:3). The eschatological thirst God has provided to mankind is Christ. He has given him resurrection and glory and bound us in faith and hope (1:20, 21).

Though the promise of God gets satisfied in future, we have made our entry into it in this life itself. This is an act of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in us transforming the future into a present experience and we are made to stand firm in hope in its fullness. What we hope is provided to us by Holy Spirit as the first fruit (Rom. 8:23 – 30; Eph. 1:13). As such, our hope is firm. In other words, our hope is the fullness of grace we are provided with. Holy Spirit strengthens us by enhancing our hope so that we can look forward to its satisfaction (Rom. 15:13; Gal. 5:5).

Hope that gets revealed in Tribulations:

“Let your hope keep you joyful, be patient in your troubles and pray at all times” (Rom. 12: 12). According to St Paul, one is patient in troubles because of being joyful in hope. At the same time, one who passes through the bitterness of troubles turns strong in patience and divinity (Rom. 5:3).

Bible teaches us that for all divine gifts to take deep roots in us to be fruitful, we have to sacrifice ourselves out of love, truth and justice to face tribulations while honouring our commitment to our brethren and the community. Hope strengthens within us through tribulations and testing. St Paul says that we are glorified in tribulations (Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:3 – 7).

Questions:

1. What do you understand about hope from these thoughts: wait for the unseen; hope against hope?
2. Give a brief explanation about 'hope in the glory of God'.
3. Prepare a note on hope surfacing in tribulations based on your experiences in life.

Lesson 5

God is Love

I give you a new command # Who is my friend?
Love your enemies # Proclamation of the new
life # God is Love # Song of Love from St Paul #
Background # Noisy Gong or Clanging Bell # Noble
Gift # Conclusion #

I give you a new command:

“And now I give you a new commandment; love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34). The novelty of this command is seen not in its first part, but in its second. See the commandment in the Old Testament, “Love your neighbour as you love yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). We must love each other as Jesus loves each one of us. Akin to what Jesus did by sacrificing himself for our sake, we must love our friends even by sacrificing our life for their sake. “The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them” (John 15:13).

Who is my friend?

It was a teacher of Law who raised this question before our Lord as we read in Luke 10:29. This teacher knows very well the answer provided to this question by the Jewish religion. They were considering only those belonging to Jewish religion as their friends and brethren. But Jesus corrects the teacher by an illustration through a metaphor. A traveller who was totally exhausted and lying helpless on the pavement as he was attacked by robbers was simply ignored by a priest as well as by a Levite who were passing by. But a Samaritan came that way and gave the traveller first aid and made all arrangements for his further treatment and welfare. Jesus, thus, points out that this Samaritan was the traveller's true friend. According to the principles of Jewish religion, when a man is in trouble, it was for a priest or Levite to step in as his brother; but here, the priest and the Levite did nothing. However, one Samaritan, who used to be treated by Jews as outcasts and enemies and belonging to another sect came up to be a true friend of the one who

was in trouble. In other words, whoever needs your love and service badly is your friend. In your emergent needs, whoever comes to you with a helping hand is your friend. Here, Jesus presents love as a virtue that breaks open all bondages of religion or colour or nation or culture or sect joining together the whole mankind in a unified brotherhood.

Love your enemies:

Jesus teaches differently from what used to be the old dictum of 'love your friend and stay away from your foe'. "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Mat. 5:44). Jesus has been correcting many old teachings and laws replacing them with new ones. His presentation style, 'you have heard that people were told in the past, -----, but now I tell you, -----' (Mat. 5:21, 22; 33, 34; 43, 44) is an example for that. Our Lord has called us to establish a new society based on love in our contemporary world replacing the one of hatred, revenge and unhealthy competitions prevailing now. It should

be possible to accept the enmity of this world towards us in happiness and with a sense of submission and not with confrontations. Shower goodness on our enemies instead of evil; give them blessings instead of curses. Pray for those who are persecuting you and spreading blasphemy; sustain in love not expecting to be returned. Christ exhorts us to formulate a new living order like this (Mat. 5: 44 – 48; Luke 6: 27 – 38).

Proclamation of the new life:

In the true sense, Jesus has not been giving a new commandment; he has been proclaiming a renewed living order that has been flooded with love of God which is totally different from the old one. The abundance of grace and remission of sins from God is another nature of God. By redeeming the sinner woman from her umpteen sins, Jesus says, “I tell you then, the great love she has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven” (Luke 7:47). What is meant here is that the love of the sinner woman has earned

remission for her sins. But where she identified the source of love that was flowing abundantly, to the very same spot, her return love was flowing in equal abundance. At the very first sight, she saw love of God in Jesus. Her response to this love culminated in her return of love. This nature of love is revealed not only in the love between man and God, but also between the love and relations between men to men. Showing mercy and the spirit of forgiveness is really reflection of God's love.

God is Love:

One of the noblest divine wisdom St John has passed on to the Christian Church is the Vedic utterance "God is Love" (1 John 4:8. 16). John who has seen and experienced Jesus tells us this truth after understanding the words and life of Jesus. "See, how much the Father has loved us! His love is so great that we are called God's children" (1 John 1:3). God's love, so noble, has

appeared in visible form and that is Jesus Christ. The cross of Jesus reveals the depth of God's love. St Paul has said, "But God has shown us how much he loves us – it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

All of us can claim to have seen God, known God, made entry to life or realised God is love. However, very often, these claims would turn out to be baseless or self deceptive. St John says that all these claims can be measured with a single yardstick; that is, love of brethren. "We know that we have left death and come over into life; we know it because we love our brothers. Whoever do not love is still under the power of death" (1 John 3:14). The one who loves has come to know God; one who loves God, we know, loves his brethren, as taught by St John (1 John 4: 7 -8; 20). No one has seen God yet; but we are sure, God lives in us as revealed from our love for others mutually (1 John 4: 12, 13).

Song of Love from St Paul:

Background: 1 Cor. 13 is a song of love. There was a peculiar background in Corinth which would have made St Paul to write this. Read chapters 12 and 14 of this epistle for a clear understanding of this. The Church of Corinth was one that was rich with gifts of Holy Spirit in all abundance; they were highly blessed with various gifts of Holy Spirit. The gifts of Holy Spirit showered on the Church of Corinth included the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing the spirits, different languages, interpretation of languages, different services, taking care of others and so on (1 Cor. 12: 8 -10; 28- 29). Each one among them possessed gifts based on the grace of Holy Spirit. However, having possession of these gifts made many of the Corinthians egoists thereby deviating from the path of love. At this stage, St Paul attempts to correct the Church of Corinth. Whatever be the gift, it has to be used for general usefulness and the spiritual growth of the Church. The basis of all gifts and their final goal should be love. The gifts

different persons have would be different from each other; whatever one has is from God. As such there shall be no jealousy or ego. But there is another gift which is far nobler than all these; that is love. St Paul says, "Set your hearts, then, on the more important gifts" and he pens down a hymn on love (1 Cor. 12:31).

Noisy Gong or Clanging Bell: The gift to help others, the gift to take care of others and such others are acts of love on the face of them. Healing the sick, doing miracles and different languages are all acts those are useful to mankind. But St Paul teaches that compared to all these, the noblest one is love. There is a reason why St Paul says this strongly in the Corinth background. Gifts come to one through the grace of Holy Spirit, but some gets into an elated feeling with this. Once there are praises from other men, this elation turns manifold. This leads to self deception and untruthfulness. Side by side, disgust and lack of commitment gets developed. The one who is blessed with gifts consider himself

nobler than another who doesn't seem to have gifts producing visible fruits; he considers his words and deeds as beyond correction. He further takes his own self induced opinion perfect rather than the inferences arrived after mutual understandings with a spirit of love. This can lead the community to hatred and lack of commitment, even to lack of mutual acceptance. This creates obstructions in the growth of the Church. All activities are governed in love and all gifts are evaluated in love. One should not fall blind in gifts, but be steadfast in goodness and grow in love. Gifts those are away from love are simply causing ripples on the exterior like a noisy gong or clanging bell.

Noble Gift: The song of love from St Paul ends like this, "Meanwhile, these three remain: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13). If we have hope in the coming world, we have no standing interests in this world. Life will be filled in love with no selfishness. If we have our reliance and faith in God, we have nothing to look

for in this world. God will be the base of our life; Love of God will be the vigour of our life.

Conclusion:

There shall be no flow of contrasting emotions; heart shall be calm, filled with life. This is presence of God. In our true love, all our brethren, the whole creation itself shall be united in us. This is love of brethren. The model of Christ's love teaches us to love God in our heart, soul and spirit in their fullness and take our brethren within ourselves; supplicate before God interceding for our brethren and sacrifice our lives for them through deeds of love. Love of God and love of brethren are not different. They are two natures of a wholesome vitality. One who is filled in love of God in its absolute truth surely loves his brethren too.

Questions:

1. In what all factors is the novelty of the commandment of Jesus' love contained?

2. How do we understand through Christ that God is Love?
3. Work out a brief note on the song of love of St Paul.

Lesson 6

You witness me

Witnessing and Discipleship # Witnesses to resurrection # St Paul, witness to Christ # St Stephen, the Martyr # Witness to the Passion of Christ # Large crowd of witnesses around us # Martyrdom and Sacrificial Offering

Witnessing and Discipleship:

The second century saw early Church undergoing widespread persecution and martyrdom whereas, the first century was different. But the model of Christ's sacrifice on the cross was always a live one before Christians. Our Lord himself had taught his disciples the need to undertake

persecution and martyrdom for the sake of God. Christ has reminded his disciples about those who underwent persecution and death in the name of God right from the righteous Abel to the prophet Zachariah (Matthew 23: 34 – 45). Those who would like to be his disciples should sacrifice themselves and follow Jesus carrying their cross (Mark 8: 34 – 38; Mark 13: 9 – 13; John 15:20; 16: 1 – 3). Discipleship always means readiness to shoulder all types of tribulations for Christ. St Paul writes, “For you have been given the privilege of serving Christ, not only by believing in him, but also by suffering for him” (Philippians 1:29; 1 Thess. 2: 14, 15; 1 Peter 3:14). During the days of persecutions, many witnesses to Christian faith went through martyrdom in the name of Christ.

Witnesses to resurrection:

Mostly, the term witness has been used in New Testament to those Apostles who witnessed the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:22). They have been witnesses not only to resurrection but also to the passion of Christ and his death (Luke 24: 48, 49;

Acts 5:30). As St Luke says, “The Messiah must suffer and must rise from the dead three days later ----- you are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:46, 48), he sees the resurrection as factual as the passion of our Lord. Apostles are witnesses to the contents of Good News. The base for this is neither hearsay nor imagination. They are historical events having taken place at specific locations. Apostles are called witnesses not in a general context, but they are specifically called to be witnesses. They were witnesses to crucial events during the life of Christ. St Luke says that they were called for it. When the Apostles sat together to choose a person in place of Iscariot Judas, Peter says, “So then, someone must join us as a witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 1:22). They have become witnesses not simply because they were eye witnesses to the death and resurrection of Jesus, but because they could digest in their faith the redemptive significance of the event (Acts 10:42).

St Paul, witness to Christ:

St Paul in Acts 22:15 and 26:16 has been mentioned as a witness to our Lord; a similar mention about St Stephen is seen in Acts 22:20. But, as we know, St Paul is not a witness to the resurrection of Christ. According to Acts 1:22, the eligibility for being a witness to Christ is having witnessed the resurrection. At the time of the transformation of St Paul, our Lord tells him directly, "I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant; you are to tell others what you have seen of me today and what I will show you in the future" (26:16). When St Paul regains his sight, Ananias tells him, "For you will be a witness for him to tell everyone what you have seen and heard" (22:15). Thus St Paul has been a witness for Christ not as one who has witnessed the resurrection, but as one who has seen Christ and proclaimed his faith in Christ.

St Stephen, the Martyr:

“And when your (Christ’s) witness Stephen was put to death -----“(Acts 22:20). This is what St Paul says about St Stephen, who too was not a witness to the resurrection of our Lord. Other Apostles have been having a call to be witnesses to Christ including St Paul (Acts 1:8; 22:15; 26:16). But we do not see St Stephen having a call like that. St Stephen sees Christ only at the moment of his martyrdom (Acts 7:55). He is being called a witness as he has proclaimed his faith in Christ. All Apostles have also been witnesses of faith like this. As St Stephen accepted death for his faith in Christ, his witnessing assumes greater significance. This is pinpointed with the mention of ‘having shed blood’. Only from the second century, the term ‘witness’ assumed the meaning ‘one who died as martyr’. However, it can be seen that New Testament formulated a basis for this.

One aspect is getting clarified when St Paul and St Stephen are counted among witnesses in New Testament. Witnesses of Christ need not have witnessed the resurrection of Christ; instead the

criterion that has taken root is that they should have proclaimed their faith in Christ. By second century, it stands modified as apart from proclaiming the faith in Christ, they should have accepted death for faith in Christ.

Witness to the Passion of Christ:

In 1 Peter 5:1, Peter calls himself, 'I am a witness of Christ's sufferings, and I will share in the glory that will be revealed'. The elders who govern the Church should be followers of the passion of Christ. Being a witness to Christ's passion, this exhortation from St Peter carries authenticity. When St Peter says here, 'witness to Christ's passion', what he means mainly is carrying the passion of Christ in his life and thus witnessing it. St Peter was not just seeing the passion of Christ, but has been shouldering the passion in his life as a witness. Such witnessing is more powerful and authentic.

Large crowd of witnesses around us:

Chapter 11 of the epistle to Hebrews contain a long list of our Old Testament saints who were steadfast in their faith; then, chapter 12 commences like this, “As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses round us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us”. Christians are like athletes who are in a running race. Whatever obstructions are there in this race have been removed. They are surrounded by hundreds of spectators who are witnessing the race; they are not just spectators, but those who have already finished their races with glory and earned their crown of victory. “It was by their faith that people of ancient times won God’s approval” (Hebrews 11:2, 4, 5, 39). They have undergone various bitter experiences like being mocked and whipped, being put in chains and imprisoned, being stoned and killed and so on through which successfully won their faith (Hebrews 11: 36 – 39). We have their

presence with us strengthening us to be courageous. Now we are in the race that we too can align ourselves with those witnesses.

Martyrdom and Sacrificial Offering:

St Paul on realising that his martyrdom is close by, writes to Timothy, “As for me, the hour has come for me to be sacrificed; the time is here for me to leave this life” (2 Tim. 4:6). Here, St Paul uses words akin to ‘sacrifice’ for ‘martyrdom’. A prayer by St Polycarp who was readying for martyrdom may be helpful here to get more clarified on these matters. ‘Oh! My Lord, may I glorify you that I am allowed to be partaker in the Cup of Christ that leads one to the resurrection and eternal life of body and soul as also in the imperishable nature gifted by Holy Spirit; this day, may I be found worthy in the gathering of angels and saints as also in your presence as an acceptable sacrifice’.

Martyrdom is a sacrifice, an offering, a Qurbana. That is truly a participation in the sacrifice of Jesus

Christ on the cross and an entry into life of resurrection and glorification.

Martyrdom has its relevance during the days of persecution. But during the days of free life, a life of witnessing is relevant. Once you hold on to your faith in Christ, it would be necessary to resist the values of this world. It would be necessary to confront strong temptations. Under such a situation, we get convinced that we have to pay a costly price for Christian witnessing. We are called for and sent to submit ourselves as a sacrifice of our body, mind and soul pleasing to God and partake in the death of Christ as also enliven the hope of resurrection, joy and glory to sustain ourselves as his witnesses in this world.

Questions:

1. What were the qualifications of Apostles to be chosen as witnesses to Christ?
2. How did St Paul and St Stephen become witnesses?

3. Justify that martyrdom and life of witnessing are sacrifices.

Unit 4

From Glory to Glory

Lesson 1

I Renew Everything

New Age and New Creation # Hope on the new creation # New Creation in Jewish Tradition # New Creation in Christ # Recreation of Universe and Glorification # Resurrection and Recreation # New Heaven and new Earth

New Age and New Creation:

There are two stages in the redemption plan of God. One of these ends up with Christ whereas the other commences with Christ. The past era of redemption plan of God has ended in Christ and the new era has commenced. The new era that has commenced in Christ comes up with new creation. New Testament calls this new era

‘Eschaton’ which is translated to Malayalam version as ‘last days’. Christ is the one who proclaims this new era. Resurrection of Christ happens to be the crucial event of the new era. Mankind is called to the experience of resurrection through Christ. The resurrected mankind begins with Christ who is its first fruit. Not mankind alone, but the whole universe and the entire creation take part in this resurrection and glorification through Christ.

Hope on the new creation:

The hope on the new creation has been very much live with Jewish rabbis as also within Old Testament in relation to Eschaton and the forthcoming anointed one of Jehovah. The Jews were prompted to think about redemption of this universe based on their concepts on origin of sin and its effects. Consequent to sin, decay and death entered the world. This had its impact not only on mankind, but even the animal world as well as the whole universe. The disintegration, disharmony, contrariety, rivalry and all are after

effects of the entry of sin. Book of Genesis clearly points to the impact of Adam's fall on the universe. Jehovah commands Adam after his fall, "Because of what you have done, the ground will be under a curse. You will have to work hard all your life to make it produce enough food for you" (Genesis 3:17). Jehovah added, "It will produce weeds and thorns, and you will have to eat wild plants. You will have to work hard and sweat to make the soil produce anything until you go back to the soil from which you were formed" (Genesis 3: 17, 18).

Books of prophecies have revealed that once the Messiah comes, history would take a turn making its entry into a new stage. Mankind and the universe would be redeemed from the curses of sin. Jews believed that the enmity and ferocity between animals are consequences of man's fall and with redemption becoming a reality, animals would live in harmony and mutual love. We read in the prophecy of Isaiah, "Wolves and sheep will live together in peace, and leopards will lie down

with young goats; ----- cows and bears will eat together ----- lions will eat straw as cattle do. Even a baby will not be harmed if it plays near a poisonous snake” (Isaiah 11: 6 – 8). Thinking of Eschatonic prophecies, the vision of new creation has been seen more often in writings during Babylon exile and post exile days. For example, look at what Isaiah (second) prophecies, “I will make rivers flow among barren hills and springs of water run in the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water and the dry land into flowing springs” (Isaiah 41: 18). Again see what Isaiah (third) says after the days of exile, “Just as the new earth and the new heavens will endure by my power, so your descendents and your name will endure” (Isaiah 66:22).

New Creation in Jewish Tradition:

The Jews during the time of Jesus used to think a lot about the fall of man and universe and the redemption coming up. They taught what the creation lost consequent to the fall; man lost three vital things and the universe too lost

another three. They are, (1) the earth lost its fertility (2) the vegetation lost their fruitfulness (3) the atmosphere lost its purity (4) man lost his glory filled nature (5) man lost eternal life (6) man lost the large size of his body. The Jews have been thinking of the redemption based on these things they lost. According to their thinking, purpose of redemption is to nullify the ill effects of the fall and bring back man and universe to their glory filled nature in its practicality.

During early days, the Jews pinned their hopes on the activities of the anointed one of Jehovah to establish peace and prosperity in the Jewish nation being established. But by the time of Christ, they believed that the entire creation and the universe would be transformed in redemption. Messiah is the Lord of the whole universe. The redemption acts being fulfilled through the Messiah would regain the unity, harmony and peace prevailed at the beginning of creation ending up with transformation to a new creation.

St Paul and other New Testament writers interpret and teach the redemption and salvation in Christ as an act of renewing the whole creation based on this Jewish religious background. Throughout the Old Testament as also in the thoughts of Jewish rabbis, purpose of redemption is this return to the glory of creation as at the very beginning. This is evident in Christian thought too; but in New Testament, redemption touches a new dimension of partaking in the glory of resurrection of Christ.

New Creation in Christ:

Among the New Testament writers, Luke, John and Paul are those who present Jesus Christ as the inspirer of new creation. As such, when they think of the incarnation of Jesus Christ as a human being as well as about his deeds here, knowingly and unknowingly they hint at the first creation. For example, when we read the message conveyed by the angel in Luke 1:35, there is clear hint to Genesis 1:2; 'power of God was moving over the water' and 'God's power will rest upon

you'. Holy Spirit was encircling at the first creation, as also at the origin of Christ, the beginner of new creation. In the first creation, we see the origin of light at the beginning. St Luke sees the birth of Christ as the origin of light. "He will cause the bright dawn of salvation to rise on us and to shine from heaven on all those who live in the dark shadow of death, to guide our steps into the path of peace" (St Luke 1:78, 79). The portion which describes the coming of Christ in John 1: 1 - 18 has repeated usage of the terms life and light. This biblical text is also reminiscent of what is stated in Genesis 1: 1 – 3.

St Paul mentions about the new creation being formulated in Christ. "In our union with Jesus Christ he has created us for a life of good deeds" (Eph. 2:10) and are a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). The 'old' is over. It is renewed (2 Cor. 5:17). Those who are joined to Christ are a new creation 'living a new life' (Rom. 6:4).

Recreation of Universe and Glorification:

We have seen the views on redemption prevailing in Old Testament as well as in the Jewish tradition. We see these in the New Testament also, particularly in the epistles of St Paul. But, there is a variation in the New Testament vision; the renewal of universe is based on resurrection of Christ and the glorification of children of God. The fall of man paved the way for the fall of universe (Genesis 3:17). As such, liberation of universe is related to the liberation of mankind. The children of God have to be freed from the bondage of sin, decay and death. When children of God are free and are glorified, creation is also freed from decay and is glorified. See what St Paul says in this context, "All of creation waits with eager longing for God to reveal his sons. For creation was condemned to lose its purpose, not of its own will, but God willed it to be so. Yet, there was the hope that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and

would share the glorious freedom of the children of God ” (Rom. 8: 19 – 21).

Resurrection and Recreation:

Resurrection of Jesus Christ forms the basis of the freedom and glorification of mankind and universe. Christ resurrected from the dead and recreated the body that was subject to decay. Mankind gets glorified in the resurrection of Christ. The glorification of human body is the beginning of the liberation of creation from decay because the human body represents the whole universe. Glorification of human body leads to glorification of the whole creation.

The redemption from Jesus Christ for the universe is not for man alone, but for the entire creation. This exhaustive vision of redemption is a very important facet of Christian faith.

New Heaven and new Earth:

The new creation of mankind and universe have commenced in Jesus Christ. And we expect its completion with the second coming. Creation will

be totally renewed; a recreation will come up. What is going to happen during the Eschaton days about these is revealed to St John as a pre vision. If 'let there be light' is the first verse of creation, the first verse of recreation of our Lord is 'I am renewing everything'. If the old creation is unstable, decaying and destroyable, the new creation is stable, eternal and imperishable. The expressions new heaven, new earth, New Jerusalem and newly dressed up bride are all attempts to present in words the new creation being established in Christ.

The worst effects of sin are illness and death. These give rise to sorrow, tribulation, tears but Christ liberates the world from sin, tribulation and death; thus, Christ gives new life to the universe and in the fullness of divinity and glory, transforms as new heaven and new earth.

Questions:

1. Briefly explain 'new age and new creation'.

2. Explain how new creation is formulated in Christ.
3. What do you mean by 'recreation' of universe?

Lesson 2

Wear the New Man

The First Man # The New Man (1) Son of Man (2) Overpowers Satan (3) Life and Resurrection through the New Man # being created for the very same New Man # Wear the New Man

The First Man:

As we have seen in the previous lesson, the Jews have been thinking a lot about Adam, the first man and his status before and after his fall. Let us try to understand what they have in their mind as reflected in such thoughts. Prior to his fall, the body Adam possessed was not that we have today for human beings. He was big enough to fill the

earth's surface. He possessed glory of God. His face was lightened with a brightness that was indescribable in words. Adam could see the whole world with the brightness he possessed. He was immortal. Adam possessed an intellect far exceeding the intellectual levels of angels. Angels respected him. Thus, Adam who was at the pinnacle of glory in all respects had his fall which was so damaging beyond expression. The fall resulted in three major losses as we have seen in the last lesson namely, (1) glorified nature (2) eternal life and (3) body size. After the fall, Adam was totally different with what he was before the fall. The Jews believed that Adam would regain his lost glory and his original body nature when God redeemed man at the Eschatonic days; thus he would transform as a new man. New Testament looks at new man in this background.

The New Man:

It was mentioned in the previous lesson that in Jesus Christ, the new era of redemption has commenced and that through Jesus Christ, a new

creation process, creation of new man, has also been set in motion. If Adam stands as the beginning of the first creation, Christ stands at the beginning of the new creation. In an ordinary sense, the meaning of 'Adam' is man. If Adam is the old man, Christ is the new man. If the old mankind originated in Adam, the new mankind is being formulated in Christ. Throughout the New Testament, there are reflections of such a comparison between Christ and Adam expressive and hidden.

Son of Man: We read in the gospels, Jesus Christ calling himself 'Son of Man'. Linguistically, son of man means man itself. But there are different interpretations as to what is meant by the term 'Son of Man' in gospels. Such interpretations have been discussed in a previous text book. Along with the concept 'Son of Man', there are underlying thoughts about the new Adam or the new man. In Jewish religious texts, Adam used to be referred as son of man. The glory lost to the first Adam has been redeemed in new Adam. Christ is complete

man in the redeemed paradise. The prophet Ezekiel has recorded having seen an image appearing to be in the nature of a man, in his vision (1:26). This image was different from an ordinary man as was filled in glory and grace (1:27) and hence was mentioned, 'nature of man'. Daniel 7:13 describes a vision of someone in the nature of son of man who has been conferred with authority, honour and royal power (7:14). "Then the Son of Man will appear, coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (Mark 13:26). All these places have expressions like 'nature of man', 'nature of Son of Man', 'Son of Man' meaning the new man having redeemed the lost glory of Adam. All these readings indicate the expectations of the anointed one of Jehovah called the Messiah. The expectations of Messiah and the new man are fulfilled in one person. This means that the Messiah who establishes Kingdom of God during Eschaton and the new man who redeems the lost glory of Adam are one and the

same. In gospels too, we see that these two expectations are being fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Satan being overpowered: The most important expectation of new age is to overpower Satan. Adam surrendered to Satan in the test. But the new man, Christ would overcome the temptations of Satan which had earlier caused Adam's fall; how this would be accomplished has been illustrated in synoptic gospels (Mat. 4:1 – 13; Mark 1: 12 – 13; Luke 4: 1 – 13). It would be a useful exercise to have a comparative study on what is recorded by Mark about the temptations of Satan before Christ and what is stated in Jewish tradition about Adam. According to Jewish tradition, wild animals at the Garden of Eden used to show respect to Adam. There was unity and harmony between man and nature. St Mark has stated that Christ has been with wild animals in the desert. According to Jewish tradition, the angels were at Adam's service at Eden; in the desert, Christ has been served by angels. There was harmony between God and man, between

heaven and earth, between man and man, between man and nature in the Garden of Eden. Eden has been closed to man consequent to his fall; this closed paradise is being opened by the new man. The whole mankind is entering the paradise through Christ, the new man, which had lost its glory with the fall of Adam.

Life and Resurrection through the New Man: St Paul calls Christ as the last Adam and the second man; he carries out a comparison between Adam and Christ (Rom. 5: 13 – 21; 1 Cor. 15:22; 45 – 49). The mankind has two things through the new man, namely life and resurrection.

- (a) Adam is the figure of Christ (Rom. 5:14). Through Adam, sin and death entered this world. Through Christ, life and grace came to the world (Rom. 5:17).
- (b) In Christ, mankind becomes part takers in resurrection. “For just as all people die because of their union with Adam, in the same way all will be raised to life because of their union with Christ” (1 Cor. 15:22). If

Adam had provided uncultured life, the 'last Adam', Christ has provided life in Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 15: 45 – 46). The body we have from Adam would be transformed to be in likeness with the body of Christ. According to physical body, man is similar to Adam. But according to resurrected body, man is in likeness to last Adam (1 Cor. 15:48). Instead of the image we got from Adam, we will wear the image of the one who is from heaven.

Here, St Paul moves a step ahead of Jewish tradition in the thoughts of new man. This means that the glory we possess is not that of Adam, but that of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are being transformed not to the image of Adam before his fall, but to the image of Christ.

Being created for the very same New Man:

The Jews believed that the whole mankind was present in Adam's body. Those men who join Christ are reborn as new men (Eph. 2:15). Ending the difference between Greek and Jew, both sides

are reconciled to be made one in Christ and transformed inseparable parts of Christ's body. In this new creation in Christ, circumcision or foreskin will not stand as a wall of separation between them. "It does not matter at all whether or not one is circumcised; what does matter is being a new creation" (Gal. 6:15). St Paul also says, "When anyone is joined to Christ, he is a new being" (2 Cor. 5:17). These exhortations of St Paul are in the Jewish background that the whole mankind was present in Adam.

Wear the New Man:

The entry into Christian life, according to St Paul, is discarding the old man and wearing the new one. "So get rid of your old self, which made you live as you used to. ----- . You must put on the new self, which is created in God's likeness and reveals itself in the true life that is upright and holy" (Eph. 4: 22 – 24; Col. 3: 9, 10). 'Get rid of' and 'wear' are terms related to baptism. Before being baptised, the old clothes are removed and after baptism, new clothes are

put on. This is metaphorical. Old clothes symbolize evil and the new clothes symbolize goodness. If the old man is decayed in desires of deception, the new one is created in truth, justice and holiness; he is created in the likeness of God (Eph. 4: 22 – 24).

Questions:

1. Why Christ is called the new man?
2. What does it mean when St Paul says that one is created as the same new man?
3. Explain how the thought 'wear the new man' is related to Holy Baptism.

Lesson 3

To the Fullness of God's Nature

Preface # Man, the pinnacle of Creation # Handiwork of God # Likeness of God and Exhaustive Person # Sovereign of the Universe

Christ, Fullness of God's Likeness # Transforming into the Likeness of God

Preface:

Jewish religion as well as Christianity has a common characteristic that they accept man as made in the likeness of God. On the one hand, man is subject to decay, yet on the other hand, man is created in the image of God. We know that God is invisible and that we cannot comprehend Him in our senses. In Exodus 20: 4 – 6, we read the strong commandment from God that we are not to make images to worship. However it looks like a wonderful feeling worth meditating that despite His invisibility, He has made man in His image that man is the visible image of God.

The term God's image is one that is seen very rarely used in the Old Testament. Even in New Testament, it is only St Paul who uses this term. However, both in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament, the thoughts that man is made in God's image and thus, among the

creations, man possesses an esteemed status quite different from other creations is seen to be underlying. As such, in Christian thought processes, the concept of 'God's nature' assumes importance.

Man, the pinnacle of Creation:

Man is the last of God's creation. Genesis 1: 1 – 25 narrates the creation of all beings of earth. The cause of creation of universe is the Word of God. God commanded, "Let there be light" and light appeared (Gen. 1:3). Till the animal world, this pattern of creation followed; then we see an intermission. Creation of mankind thus is a specific plan of divinity. "And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resembling us" (Gen. 1:26). This divine plan indicates the creation of human beings different from other creations and in the nature and in the likeness of God. Thus, man is created as the pinnacle of the whole creations.

Handiwork of God:

There are two narrations on creation in the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis. In 2:7, we read, “Then the Lord took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; he breathed life giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live”. Here the word ‘formed’, as we understand from the verse itself, is meaning just like a potter making a vessel from clay, man was formed from soil. Thus, that specific relation between man and God is evidenced in the process of creation itself.

Man, who is the handiwork of God, has in his external appearance too, the nature of God reflected on him. His physique is in God’s nature. What could we understand when it is said that man’s physique is in God’s nature? Let us compare the body structure of man with that of other created beings. Man’s body has the capacity to stand erect and call God, “Father”, lifting his eyes to the heaven. Thus man can address God and be in communion with Him; this is evident in his body structure. Moses who confronted God on

Mount Sinai is an illustration of man's possibilities of being in the nature of God. At the same time, after the fall, Adam and Eve are hiding away from God not having the courage to confront Him; again, after killing his brother Abel, Cain looks down having lost the courage to face God; these incidents are examples of nature of God having got distorted in them.

Likeness of God and Exhaustive Personality:

There are Christian scholars who interpret the nature of God in man as a spiritual character or intellect or ethics and thus some sort of an internal power. However, most theologians concur with the view that nature of God represents man's exhaustive personality including his physique. Genesis 5: 1 - 3 reveals that the nature of God and likeness of God Adam possessed was passed on to his children also. In Gen. 9:6, we read "Man was made like God, so whoever murders a man will himself be killed by his fellowman". These verses clarify the physical side of 'God's nature'. Psalm 8:5 reads as, "Yet,

you made him inferior only to yourself, you crowned him with glory and honour". (The original version uses the word 'beauty' instead of 'honour' here and indeed, 'beauty' seems more meaningful). Psalm 8 is penned based on Genesis 1: 26, 27. Though the word, 'nature' doesn't come here, what is being pictured is the greatness of man who is in the nature of God. Glory and beauty indicate man's internal and external glory and beauty. Ezekiel 28:12 describes Adam as an epitome of beauty personified. Thus, nature of God includes man's exhaustive personality internally and externally. It is worth noting that the Bible has nowhere dealt body and soul as separate and different from each other.

Sovereign of the Universe:

In the narration on creation of man as we read in the Book of Genesis, what constitute God's nature is not illustrated. But, man, who is created in the likeness of God is specifically stated to be the sovereign of all creations. "They will have power over the fish, the birds and all animals, domestic

and wild, large and small” (Gen. 1:26). God is the Lord and creator of universe. Man, who is in the nature of God, is responsible to lead and rule this universe as a representative of God. God having entrusted man as the sovereign of this universe is not to mean that he can misuse it for his selfish desires. “Then the Lord God placed man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to guard it” (Gen. 2:15).

‘Nature’ doesn’t mean a metaphor, but it is a presence in reality; this is very much the same in Old Testament, New Testament as also in other ancient cultures. Whoever is represented in the ‘nature’ is clearly present in that ‘nature’. Man has been entrusted by God as His living presence and to represent His sovereignty over the universe. Thus, man who is God natured is expected to look after the universe and transform the creations into the likeness of God by filling them with the presence of God.

Christ, Fullness of God’s Likeness:

St John doesn't call Christ as 'likeness of God', yet this thought gets reflected on many occasions in his writings. "The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only son" (John 1:14). The word 'likeness' though not used here, this idea is intermingled with 'glory'. The concept 'likeness of God' is underlying in verses, "Whoever sees me sees also him who sent me" (John 12:45) and "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). We are children of God now itself, but have not transformed to its fullness as of now. St John says, when Christ comes again, we would be transformed to his likeness (1 John 3:2).

St Paul is more specific as we read, "Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15) and "He keeps them from seeing the light shining on them, the light that comes from the Good News about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God"(2 Cor. 4:4). Comparing with the first man, St Paul sees Christ as the full likeness of

God (1 Cor. 15: 44 – 49). In 2 Cor. 4:4 and Col. 1:15, the assumption that Christ is the second Adam is seen though concealed. Mankind regains God's likeness and God's glory through second Adam who is God's likeness in its fullness.

Transforming into the Likeness of God:

The Bible doesn't teach that man has lost God's likeness consequent to the fall. Verses 5: 1 -3 and 9:6 of Genesis underline that God's likeness is very much present in the descendants of Adam. Jewish religious tradition also does not teach loss of God's likeness after the fall. As we have seen in the last lesson, though the Rabbis teach that as a result of the fall, man has lost glory, corpulence of body and immortality, it is pertinent to note that they do not teach man having lost God's likeness. But the wholeness of this likeness of God and the clarity thereof is certainly lost. St Paul too holds this very same view about God's likeness. He has been stressing through his epistles that man should grow up into the possibilities of God's likeness in its wholeness. Man has to regain the

glory of God's likeness through Christ, who happens to be God's likeness in its absoluteness. When we become partners in God's likeness that is revealed in His son Christ, Christ is the first born and we are his brothers (Rom. 8:29). St Paul has this hope; "Just as we wear the likeness of the man made of earth, so we will wear the likeness of the Man from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:49).

St Paul has further pointed out that God's likeness can be kindled in us only by making our life holy. We have to wear the new man who is the likeness of our creator by discarding deeds of the old man namely impurity, excessive sexual passion, evil desire, idol worship, greed and such other bad traits from us (Col. 3:5, 8 – 10). We look forward to the total transformation to God's likeness in the second coming of our Lord. However, we are even now in the process of this transformation to the fullness of God's likeness (2 Cor. 3:18).

Questions:

1. What are the characteristics of man, who is the handiwork of God?
2. What are the responsibilities of man as the sovereign of this universe?
3. Explain how we transform to God's likeness.

Lesson 4

Transform to God's Nature

Jesus Transforms # External Image Changes # Nature Changes # Transformation, Resurrection and Glory # Possibilities of man who is in God's Image # Entry into Heavenly Fellowship # Not being aligned to the nature of this world # Transform to God's Nature

Jesus Transforms:

Atop a high mountain, our Lord has transformed before three of his disciples. This incident is recorded in synoptic gospels as also in the second epistle of Peter (Matthew 17: 1 – 9; Mark 9: 2 – 10; Luke 9:28 – 36; 2 Peter 1: 16 – 21). Though St

John has been an eye witness to this transformation, he hasn't recorded this in his gospel. St John has been stressing on the revelation of God's glory in the death and resurrection of our Lord as well as throughout his life. Transformation and glory are not being confined to just one incident (1; 14; 2:11; 13:31; 17:1, 4 – 5; 21:19). In its entirety of the gospel according to St John, Jesus is seen as the glorified new man who has himself been transformed and also transforming this world. The transformation of Jesus is traditionally believed to be in Mount Tabor, but there are biblical scholars who opine that this would have been on Mount Hermon.

External Image Changes:

In the transformation of Jesus, his external image itself has undergone changes. In Greek, the word used for 'transformation' is 'metamorphoses'. This word clearly indicates changes in the external nature. While St Matthew and St Mark use the

word 'transformation', St Luke says, "His face changed its appearance" conveying the same idea. This incident is not just some sort of an appearance, but a true transformation. Transformation is not simply an internal change, but it touches one's external nature too. As discussed in earlier lessons, the spiritual growth of man and the experience of salvation involve one's exhaustive personality, internally and externally.

Nature Changes: The transformation of Jesus is not a transformation of his body alone; even the nature is transformed. "And his clothes became shining white, whiter than anyone in the world could wash them" (Mark 9:3). The entire atmosphere was covered in glory. The transformation of man raises hope of a new world. That is not a different world, but the present one transformed as new. Not only man, even the nature and time are all subjected to such changes.

The eastern Churches give lot of importance to the transformation of Jesus. They view the

transformation of Jesus as a model to the transformation of man and the universe.

Transformation, Resurrection and Glory:

It is recorded that Jesus as wearing glory with the transformation. The resurrection of our Lord has been the entry to the fullness of glory. “Then the Son of Man will appear, coming in the clouds with great power and glory” (Mark 13:26). At the second coming of our Lord, the Church too would make entry into the fullness of glory. The transformation of Jesus points to the glory of resurrection and to the glory of his second coming. The transformation of the Church is a foretaste of the glory of resurrection coming up with the second coming of our Lord and our growth into that glory.

Possibilities of man who is in God’s Image:

There is an interpretation that through his transformation, Jesus was making known his Divinity. But more realistically, the transformation of our Lord is revealing the possibilities of the

spiritual growth of man who is made in God's image. Man who is made from soil and is mortal has to be transformed to glory. Having got purified from all sorts of evil, man has to be in close relationship with God to grow in glory. The transformation is experienced in its wholeness only at the second coming of our Lord. But we can make an entry into the experience of transformation during this life itself.

Entry into Heavenly Fellowship:

At the time of Jesus' transformation, Moses and Elijah appeared in glory. They are prophets representing two different eras of Jewish history. These two eras are the one before the Israel's entry into Canaan and the other, after their entry into Canaan. Their presence here indicates the communion our Lord Jesus has with heaven and those who are in heaven. This shall not be treated as just an appearance of two prophets. This is an indication of a lively communion with them. Both Moses and Elijah talk with Jesus. Their subject of discussion is the crucifixion Jesus has to face in

Jerusalem. Transformation cannot be considered as a spiritual feeling one experiences in his personal relationship with God. Transformation is one's entry into the new world of God's glory. There, man is renewed and wears glory of God; he also joins the fellowship of saintly men. The communion with the saintly men who lives in God's glory is another crucial facet of transformation.

Not being aligned to the nature of this world:

In the epistles of St Paul, there are thoughts of two worlds or two eras. One is a world that is subjected to Satan and his designs, and the other is a world that has overcome Satan and providing redemption from sin. This concept of St Paul about different worlds is beyond our understandings of time and space. A new world has to be formulated through Jesus Christ in this world itself that is filled with evil. Once we start a life that is not aligned to this world, but aligned to that new world revealed in Jesus Christ, we and

our surroundings make our entry into the new experience.

St Paul says in Rom. 12:2, “Do not conform to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind; then you will be able to know the will of God”. St Paul’s exhortation for transformation has reflections of the call of Jesus for internal change within men. Thus, Intellect, body and mind or the personality in its totality partakes in this transformation as evidenced in Rom. 12: 1, 2. The death of Jesus on the cross has redeemed us from the evil world and having placed us in the experience of new world. We are expected to live a new life in the new world.

Transform to God’s Nature:

St Paul says that the faithful would be transformed at the second coming of our Lord. “We shall not die, but when the last trumpet sounds, we shall all be changed in an instant, as quickly as the blinking of an eye; for when the

trumpet sounds, the dead will be raised, never to die again, and we shall be changed. For what is mortal must be changed into what is immortal; what will die must be changed into what cannot die” (1 Cor. 15:52, 53). Again, “He will change our weak mortal bodies and make them like his own glorious body” (Philippians 3:21). All these verses reveal the hope for the fullness of transformation.

Along with these, another thing St Paul highlights is that the new era of the future has come here through Jesus Christ. We have been given Holy Spirit as the first fruit of fullness of salvation (Rom. 8:23) that is being completed during Eschaton and as the guarantee (2 Cor. 1:22). Holy Spirit lives in the Church and continuously rear up the Church to the experience of transformation. Recreating man in the nature of God aligned with the image of Christ is a process being fulfilled by Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

Questions:

1. What is the relation between transformation, resurrection and glory?
2. How do we understand the exhortation of St Paul not to be aligned with this world?
3. How do we transform to God's nature?

Lesson 5

From Glory to Glory

Glory of God in Redemption acts # Glory of God
– Presence of God # Having seen Glory, being
Glorified # Man created in Glory # Glory of God
revealed in Christ # Cross and Glory # From Glory
to Glory #

Glory of God in Redemption acts:

God interferes in history strongly and redeems His people who are in slavery, who are under threat

from armed forces of enemies and who are in different sorts of dangers and raises and protects them. Thus, God's Glory is revealed to the world and to the Israelites through His acts. The Israelites who left Egypt were followed by Pharaoh and his forces, but Jehovah comforts them, "My victory over the king and his army will bring me honour" (Exodus 14:4, 7, 8). When people were hungry while traversing the desert they were protected by Jehovah by showering them Manna whereby God's Glory is revealed (Exodus 16:7). During the days of exile in Babylon, prophet Isaiah provides them hope of redemption and says, "Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind will see it; the Lord himself has promised this" (Isaiah 40:5). After liberation from exile, the people were living in their homeland absorbed in laziness having lost their hope and faith; the prophet convinces them that their God is there very much with them in His full glory. "Arise Jerusalem, and shine like the sun;

the glory of the Lord is shining on you” (Isaiah 60:1).

Glory of God – Presence of God:

When God showed his presence in Mount Sinai to provide the Laws, “The dazzling light of the Lord’s presence came down on the mountain” (Exodus 24:16). The ark of covenant where the stone tablets recording the Ten Commandments was placed happened to be the abode of God’s glory. The tabernacle where the ark of covenant was placed and the temple used to be filled with glory of God as we read in Exodus 40:34, 1 Kings 8: 4 - 11. Listen what the daughter in law of priest Eli says when the ark of covenant was seized by Philistines, “God’s Glory has left Israel” (1 Samuel 4:22). People of Israel used to attach lot of importance to the Laws. The commandments given to them by Jehovah shows how much they were looked after by Jehovah. These commandments are really God’s will and Words. Also, they were His presence, as they believed. Glory of God indicates His presence. When they

say that the glory is lost, what is really meant is that the redeeming presence of God is lost to Israel.

Having seen Glory, being glorified:

Moses is one who experienced the power of God's glory through miraculous deeds. On Mount Sinai, Moses spoke to God face to face (Exodus 33:11); but he could not see God. On expressing his desire to see God, God reveals His glory to Moses (Exodus 33: 17 – 23). Even the glory of God is covered and revealed to Moses. In short, it has not been made specific what the glory is. It is said that God reveals His splendour (Exodus 33:19). The Hebrew word used for 'splendour' can be translated as 'goodness and beauty'. Whatever be that, Moses indeed has seen the glory of God as is witnessed in his transformation. When Moses descended the mountain, his face was shining (Exodus 34:29). Moses having seen glory of God is glorified.

Man created in Glory:

Psalm 8 says that man has a second to none position among all creations, “O Lord, our Lord, your greatness is seen in the entire world” (8:1). About man, the psalmist continues, “Yet you made him inferior only to yourself; you crowned him with glory and honour” (8:5). This verse is a meditational interpretation of Genesis 1:26. Man who is created in God’s likeness and image has worn glory and beauty. In 1 Corinthians 11:7, “man (not a woman) reflects the image and glory of God”. Here, St Pauls sees God’s likeness and glory exclusively for man and not for woman; but there are other occasions where he attributes these to mankind as a whole (1 Cor. 15:49).

In Jewish religious traditions, there are detailed narrations about the status of man before and after the fall. Before the fall Adam was filled in glory. He had a dazzling shine on his face challenging the sun. But, consequent to the fall, man lost this glory. St Paul too accepts this stand. He has written, “Every one has sinned and is far away from God’s saving presence” (Rom. 3:23).

Redemption of man means redeeming the lost glory of God.

Glory of God revealed in Christ:

St Paul commences his thoughts of glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ. He says, Christ is the image of God and God's glory is reflected on his face (2 Cor. 4: 4, 6). During the Old Testament days, glory of God used to be seen by Israelites in relation with the Laws. The ark of covenant and the temple where it was placed was filled with glory of God and presence of God. As per the Jewish views, the Laws represent God's great redemption plan for his people. But St Paul sees in Christ the redemption of God as well as the presence of God as evidenced in God's glory. In 2 Cor. 4:6, a new mankind is pictured where glory of God is present. During the acts of first creation, God said light should shine from darkness; now, a new mankind is formed in Jesus Christ where the glory of God dazzles out of the evil forces of darkness. Thinking in these lines, redemption means growing in the glory of God.

When St Paul writes about the glory on the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:6), two incidents would have come up in his mind. (1) Though he was not a witness to it, from the Christian traditions, St Paul would have had knowledge about the transformation of Jesus Christ atop that mountain; (2) Resurrected Christ appeared to St Paul at the entry gate of Damascus and the dazzling light made him blind (Acts 9:3; 22:11; 26:13). In his personal life too, the vision of Christ's glory would have been sufficient to transform St Paul as a new creation.

Cross and Glory:

The 'Son of Man' appears in glory in Old Testament as also in Jewish traditions. "He was given authority, honour and royal power" (Daniel 7:14). In New Testament too we read the appearance of Son of Man in great power and glory (Mark 13:26). But the Son of Man we see in the gospels is one who goes through sufferings. Gospels give a picture of Son of Man as one who passes through sufferings and thus makes his entry into glory. After the resurrection, two

disciples were travelling to Emmaus to whom resurrected Christ appears and tells, “Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?” (Luke 24:26). In the gospel according to St John, the relation between cross and glory is presented with more clarity. According to the views of St John, crucifixion itself is glorification. By subjecting totally to will of the Father, Christ offers himself to tribulations and death thereby he is glorified. Having made him ready to accept the cross, Christ says, “Now, the Son of Man’s glory is revealed; now God’s glory is revealed through him” (John 13:31). The Church which is called to glory has to follow the same path of cross as shown by Christ. “Since we are his children, we will possess the blessings he keeps for his people, and we will also possess with Christ what God has kept for him; for if we share Christ’s suffering, we will also share his glory” (Rom. 8:17). “And this small and temporary trouble we suffer will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory, much greater than the trouble” (2 Cor. 4:17). See

what St Peter qualifies himself, “I am a witness to Christ’s sufferings and I will share in the glory that will be revealed” (1 Peter 5:1). The Christ who is resurrected and standing in full glory is the same one as possessing the nail marks on his hands and legs as also having pierced by that spear on his side.

From Glory to Glory:

Through Holy Baptism, God has called us to the kingdom of God and to the glory of God. St Paul has said: “----- God calls you to share his own Kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12); “He called you to possess your share of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:14). Since God has called us to His glory, St Paul confidently affirms that we have come to the experience of glory. “And so those whom God set apart, he called; and those He called, he put right with Himself, and he shared His glory with Him” (Rom. 8:30).

It is our hope that we would be glorified in the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. In 2 Cor. 3:18, St Paul says that the process of glorification has already commenced and that we are growing as partners of glory. This is the most important contribution of St Paul to New Testament thoughts regarding glory of God. "All of us then reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord , who is the Spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever greater degree of glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). Sharing the experience of glory is not something that is confined to any peculiar occasion. That is an experience we have throughout our Christian life. God has called us to discard the covering of evil and untruthfulness which obstruct us to see and reflect the glory of God and thus face God with internal and external freedom to witness the glory of God and share that glory to transform continuously from glory to glory. Holy Spirit is the Lord of this redemption process. Holy Spirit

transforms us through Jesus Christ to a new person possessing glory of God.

Questions:

1. Give some examples from the Old Testament to show that glory of God gets revealed through acts of redemption.
2. Explain the relationship between cross and glory.
3. Prepare a brief note to illustrate our growth in the glory of God.

Lesson 6

Come O! Spirit of Glory

Service of Spirit and Glory (1) two conditions (2) service of letters (3) service of Spirit (4) Spirit of glory (5) Holy Spirit, Lord and Leader # Holy Spirit liberates (1) The veil is gone (2) confronts God boldly # Holy Spirit, the guarantee and first fruit

(1) guarantee and first fruit (2) Strengthening in hope # Conclusion

Service of Spirit and Glory:

Two conditions:

The redemption system established in Jesus Christ is named 'new system' or 'New Covenant' by St Paul and the service of New Covenant is called 'service of the Spirit' (2 Cor. 3:6). St Paul classifies God's redemption plan as two stages. One ends up with Jesus Christ and the other commences with Jesus Christ. Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel had prophesied that a new age would come up with God's plan of redemption. Jeremiah prophecies, "The time is coming when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with people of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31). But there appears a crucial difference between these two prophets when the characteristics of the new system are explained. Jeremiah says, "I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts" (31:33) whereas Ezekiel says, "I will put my spirit

in you” (36:27). According to what is prophesied by Ezekiel, God provides a spirit in place of Law in the new system. St Paul too explains the new redemption plan established through Jesus Christ in these lines.

Service of letters:

The service of the old system is called ‘service of letters’ by St Paul. It shall be recalled that the Laws Moses received were engraved on stone plates in letters. These Laws were given by God for the redemption of His people, but they turned out inadequate for redemption. As such, the Laws written on stone give death and judgment. Stone plate symbolizes inertness and lifelessness. Law can only condemn man as sinner deserving death. As such, St Paul defines the service of letters engraved on stone plates as a service for death and judgment (2 Cor. 3: 6 – 9).

Service of Spirit:

Spirit provides life and vigour. The main sign of the new system is not the Law written inside; it is

the Holy Spirit living inside. Holy Spirit lives in our hearts and provides compassion in heart and the strength to be responsive to divinity. “I will give you a new heart and a new mind. I will take away your stubborn heart of stone and give an obedient heart. I will put my spirit in you and I will see to it that you follow my laws and keep all the commands I have given you” (Ezekiel 36: 26, 27). These are what Ezekiel prophecies about the transformation we are going to have once the spirit is placed inside us. The service of letters is a service of judgment, but the service of spirit is a service of righteousness (2 Cor. 3:9). In the new system, what leads us is not the Law, but Holy Spirit living in us. Holy Spirit transforms us as a new man of life, holiness, righteousness and glory.

Spirit of glory:

The old system was based on the Laws God provided to Moses whereas the new system has

its base in Holy Spirit. When God gave the Laws to Moses on the Mount Sinai, the Mount was filled with glory. Moses saw the glory and his face dazzled with glory. As Moses descended Mount Sinai, Israelites were afraid to look at Moses on his face that his face was so brightened. Thus, the Laws originated in glory (Exodus 24:12, 15 – 17). St Paul understood the glorification of Moses as a share in the glory provided by the service of Laws (2 Cor. 3:7). Glory is associated with the Laws; the share Moses had in the glory is the best example for this. But St Paul says that the glory provided by Holy Spirit is many times greater than the glory provided by the Laws. If the service of death and judgment is glorious, the service of spirit and righteousness is much more glorious (2 Cor. 3: 7 – 11). We read in 1 Peter 4:14, “The glorious Spirit, the Spirit of God, is resting on you”. Holy Spirit lives in us and we grow in the glory of the new system.

Holy Spirit, Lord and Leader:

The new system established by Jesus Christ is based on Holy Spirit. Through the acts of Holy Spirit, we become partners in the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The Jewish religion during the time of our Lord expected that God would provide Holy Spirit at Eschaton. They believed that Holy Spirit is the gift of God at Eschaton and the source of strength then. New Testament reveals that the early Christian Church too held on to this belief. Look at the command of Jesus Christ just prior to his ascension on their waiting for Holy Spirit, “But you must wait in the city until the power from above comes down upon you” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). In New Testament itself, we can see that the Church is gradually growing into the belief that Holy Spirit is one among the Holy Trinity. In 2 Cor. 3:17 and 18, it is stated that Holy Spirit, our Lord leads us to liberation and glory of God. In the epistles of St Paul, usually, Jesus Christ is addressed as Lord; here, Holy Spirit is called Lord. The reason is that the act of redemption commenced in Jesus Christ has Holy Spirit as its

Lord and leader. Holy Spirit makes us and the entire universe partners in the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Holy Spirit liberates:

The veil is gone:

Moses descended Mount Sinai and when he confronted the people, he covered his face with a veil which he removed when facing God as we read in Exodus 34: 29 – 35. St Paul sees a deeper inner meaning to this (2 Cor. 3:12 – 18). The reason why Israelites could not realise the glory of God on the face of Moses was their hardened hearts. They were not feeling free in their inside. But Moses could confront God face to face without the veil. This indicates courage to face God without fear because of the feeling of freedom inside. The veil of Moses symbolizes Israel's hardness of hearts (2 Cor. 3: 14). The situation that one cannot face the glory of God with freedom and courage is a notable limitation of Old Testament. Israelites seek the message of

redemption through their Laws wearing a veil of hardness of heart, fear and slavery in sin. But Holy Spirit makes us free and thus in Christ, this veil stands removed. St Paul continues, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:17).

Confronting God with confidence:

The freedom we have in Holy Spirit is twofold. One, as explained earlier, we have freedom from the evil forces those place us in slavery. Two, we gain self confidence to confront God with courage (2 Cor. 3: 12, 18). Holy Spirit gifts us that freedom to call God as Father just like children address their natural fathers freely (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). The Jews never addresses God as ‘my Father’. But Christ calls God as Father (Mark 14:36; Matthew 26:39, 42; 11:26). This is an indication of the intimacy of relationship with Father. The same freedom of kinship Christ had with God is being

enlivened in us also by Holy Spirit. As such, we too can address God as our Father. St Paul says, “For the Spirit that God has given you does not make you slaves and cause you to be afraid; instead, the Spirit makes you God’s children, and by the Spirit’s power we cry out to God, ‘Father, my Father’” (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). Thus, Holy Spirit makes us free to discard the veil and to turn to God to view His glory and transform gradually to the fullness of glorification (2 Cor. 3:19).

Holy Spirit, the guarantee and first fruit:

Guarantee and first fruit:

As indicated above, the early Church accepted Holy Spirit as the source of power in the forthcoming new age. In Christ, we have made our entry to this new age, but not to its fullness. Looking forward to such fullness from Holy Spirit, we do experience the fellowship of Holy Spirit as also the graces even now. St Paul uses two terms to explain this experience: (1) ‘Aarabon’ – guarantee; the first gift of our rights to be

received from Holy Spirit is guaranteed and this is Holy Spirit himself (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; Gal. 4:6, 7; 5:5). (2) ‘Apparkke’ – first fruit; the first fruit of the forthcoming divine gifts in the new world is Holy Spirit which is placed in us by God (Rom. 8:23).

Strengthening in hope:

God has given us Holy Spirit who is the guarantee and first fruit of all those divine rights and divine gifts of the forthcoming new world. New Testament exhorts us to stand firm before persecutions and temptations. The epistle to Hebrews points out, “They were once in God’s light; they tasted heaven’s gifts and received their share of the Holy Spirit; they knew from experience that God’s word is good and they had felt the powers of the coming age” (Hebrews 6:4, 5). This verse reveals that heavenly gifts, Holy Spirit and the coming age are three thoughts those move together.

Conclusion:

Holy Spirit keeps in us the redemption deeds alive and fulfilled in Jesus Christ making them cotemporary experiences for us as also makes us enjoy the divine rights of the coming age right now itself. Thus Holy Spirit makes our entry to eternity by linking the past and future with the present, thereby ending up the separation in time and enables us grow up in the glory of God. Come O! Spirit of Glory

Questions:

- 1.Explain briefly the service of Holy Spirit in the redemption plan established in Christ.
- 2.What are the two levels of freedom gifted to us by Holy Spirit?
- 3.How Holy Spirit, the guarantee and first fruit, do strengthen us in hope?