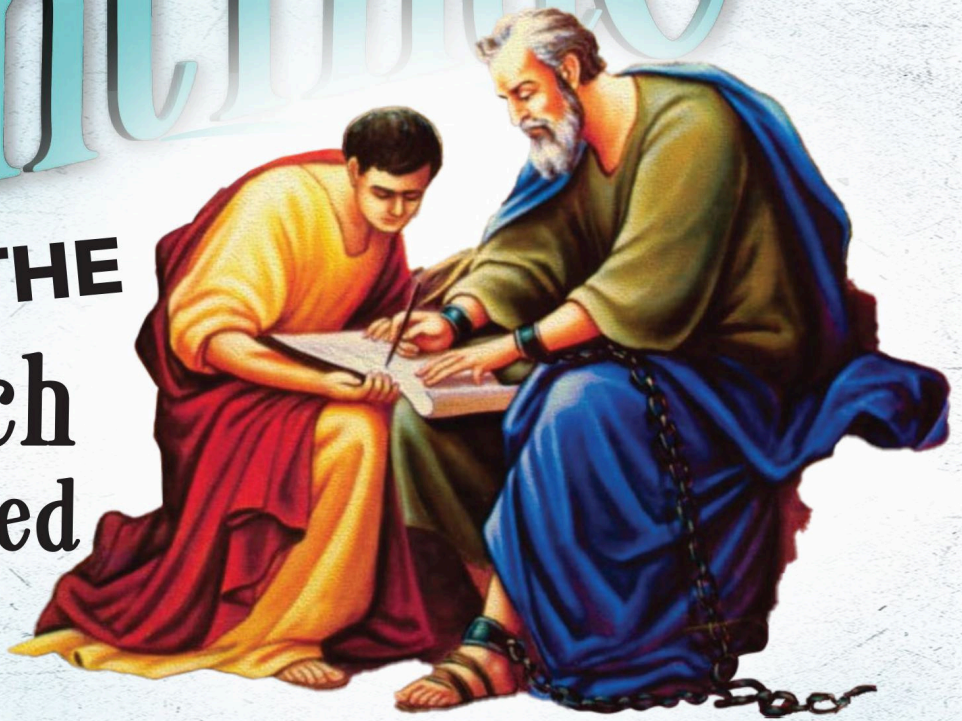


Mahragan El-Keraza
2025

Continue

IN THE
things which
you have learned
(2 Timothy 3:14)



English Edition

Grades 7-8



*Continue in the things
which you have learned* (2 Timothy 3:14)



H.H. Pope Tawadros II

**Pope of Alexandria &
Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark**



H.G. Bishop David

**Bishop of the Diocese of
New York and New England**



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Introduction

The theme of this year is: **“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of” (2 Timothy 3:14)**

Saint Paul the Apostle spoke to his disciple Timothy about the difficulty and corruption of the Last Days. He emphasized the necessity of striving with a spirit of strength, not a spirit of despair, to preserve the true Faith and resist heresies firmly with gentleness and love. He explained to him that Saint Timothy should not be surprised by the presence of these resisters, for at every age, there are those who resist divine work. With the Redemptive Work of Christ manifested, Satan raged against the newborn Church, in external and internal wars. The closer we get to the end of time, evil will naturally increase, for **Satan always resists the Truth**. But what reassures us is the promise of Christ that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church. We live with confidence because “God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved” (Psalms 46:5) and “But he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13).

Our Faith was established from the beginning by our Lord Jesus, preached by the Apostles, preserved by the Church Fathers, lived out by the Church, and handed down from generation to generation in its pure and true form. In this regard, Saint Paul the Apostle instructed his disciple Timothy, the Bishop, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also,” (2 Timothy 2:2). We must preserve the Apostolic Faith that was once delivered to the saints, as noted in the Epistles of Saint Jude, and refrain from introducing changes or altering the ancient doctrines established by our forefathers.



For over 2,000 years, our Church, founded by the Lord Jesus, has maintained a steadfast and upright Faith, never swaying to the right or to the left. The Faith we uphold is **“one Faith” (Ephesians 4:5)**. This one Faith is echoed in our morning prayers (in the Prime Hour of the Book of Hours) and is shared by every member of the Church. Its primary source is the **Holy Bible**, followed by the teachings of the **Holy Fathers**. The approved canons of the Holy Councils and the writings found in Church books, especially the Liturgy, also contribute to this Faith. Collectively, these are known as Church Tradition, all of which align with the Holy Bible.

From the early days of the Apostolic Fathers, the Church has been diligent in maintaining the integrity of its teachings to safeguard the purity of the Faith. Saint Paul the Apostle expressed this to his disciple, Titus, Bishop of Crete, *“But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine,” (Titus 2:1)*. In his wisdom, King Solomon also said, *“He who keeps instruction is in the way of life,” (Proverbs 10:17)*.



In the Church, **teachers must not share their opinions regarding faith and doctrine**. Instead, they are called to teach the unaltered doctrine as it has been passed down to them. While every individual is free to hold their own beliefs, diverging from the established teachings can lead to disunity within the One Church. It is essential to maintain the integrity of the Faith without introducing personal interpretations. Consequently, those prioritizing their opinions over sound doctrine should not be allowed to teach.



The content of teachings must be aligned with the Faith that was once delivered to the saints. The Church has consistently taken care to preserve and convey the Faith and doctrine throughout its history. For instance, the heresy of the Alexandrian priest Arius sparked the convening of a local council attended by the holy Patriarch St. Peter, the seal of the martyrs, Pope Alexander, and hundreds of bishops from Alexandria and Libya. This led to the ecumenical **Council at Nicaea in 325 A.D.**, which included 318 bishops from around the world. During this council, the true doctrine was affirmed, and the false heresy of Arius was condemned. At no point was it suggested that everyone should be free to hold their own opinion.

What leads to heresies?

1: Heresies often arise from incorrect beliefs or teachings. This can occur when someone becomes intertwined with different faith backgrounds and is influenced by their teachings. It may also happen when an individual is influenced by others through their works and writings. St. Paul warns his disciple, St. Timothy, *“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you,”* (1 Timothy 4:16).

2: The tendency to **value one’s own opinions over established truths, leading to a refusal to change or to obey the teachings of the Church.** St. Paul reminds us that *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables,”* (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

3: **Pride** can lead individuals to firmly believe they are correct while dismissing others as wrong, under the assumption that they know better than everyone else.

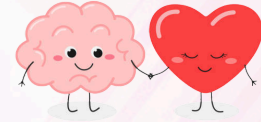
*Continue in the things
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Characteristics of the Believing Christian

A Believing Christian is...



Filled with Christ:

An Orthodox believer must embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, dwelling in Him constantly in both heart and mind. This includes studying His Word and understanding His Divinity as One of the Holy Trinity. Knowledge of doctrine and theology is gained through the life of the Church and her teachings. It is essential to be filled internally through the Eucharist, as stated in John 6:56: *“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.”* This union with the Lord Jesus Christ transforms a believer's life, making Him the essence of his or her existence. The Lord Himself is manifested daily in their lives! Salvation can only be found through the Lord Jesus Christ.

How can one teach effectively without being in fellowship with the Lord? If a person is not continually connected to Him, their understanding will be superficial; the Lord will not be their life. *“For in Him, we live and move and have our being,”* (Acts 17:28). When we look at the **saints**, we see **reflections of the Lord Jesus Christ**. Thus, it is crucial to learn their stories and strive to imitate them in faith since it is Christ who leads to the sanctification of people to become saints. He who loves the saints loves the Lord Jesus Christ.





We also cultivate our relationship with the Lord through **prayer**, which serves as a continuous channel connecting us with God. Through prayer, believers receive wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Church encourages her children to maintain a daily relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ through the prayers of the Book of Hours, the Agpeya. This practice connects us with the Lord throughout the day.



In the **Prime Hour**, we celebrate the **Resurrection**. During the **Third Hour**, we are **filled with the Holy Spirit**. At the **Sixth Hour**, we meditate on the events of the **Crucifixion**. The **Ninth Hour** reminds us to die to ourselves in the **death** of the Lord Jesus Christ. The **Eleventh Hour** reflects on the Lord as He is **taken down from the Cross**. The **Twelfth Hour** focuses on His **burial**, and with the **Midnight Prayer**, we await His **Second Coming**. Thus, through the prayers of the Book of Hours, we continually meditate on the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the day.



One of the most important prayers that the Church teaches us is the Jesus Prayer: *"My Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me."* We also say, *"My Lord Jesus Christ, help me."* *"I praise you, my Lord Jesus Christ."* These are known as **"arrow prayers."** Thus, Christians live in daily fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, turning to Him for guidance throughout the events of the day. As Psalm 34:8 reminds us, *"Oh taste and see that the Lord is good."* The love of the Lord Jesus Christ is both the **sign** and the **key** to our faith in Him.



Filled with Holy Bible:

In this fast-paced age of knowledge, new ideas, both good and bad, are constantly at our fingertips. The youth are exposed to various philosophies, thoughts, and moral challenges that can threaten their lives, futures, spirituality, and understanding of eternal life. Therefore, we must learn and understand the Holy Scripture. The **Holy Bible is our primary source of faith and ecclesiastical teaching and must be studied personally as a message from God to us.** We should pray with the words we read and meditate on them. Additionally, we need to study them in the context of the teachings of the Church Fathers, which will enable us to understand God's words through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will support us with verses that are relevant to various situations.

Filled with the Holy Church:

This is how we truly live the depth of Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy represents a way of life; it reflects the **straight path of glorifying God.** By living the Coptic Orthodox life, we participate in a liturgical and ecclesiastical Life. The Church is the assembly of believers who gather in the consecrated House of God, under the leadership of clergy, amidst angels and saints, around the Holy Body and Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here, we find the gathering of doctrine, consecrated rituals, clergy, sacraments, holy angels, and saints, all guiding us as *“members of the household of God,”* (Ephesians 2:19). They support us in genuine fellowship centered around the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, and Savior, especially in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. In every Divine Liturgy, we experience a profound power in the Church—doctrine, rites, history, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Each ritual encompasses all these elements because rites and rituals explain the doctrine they convey, relating to us the heavenly teaching. That is why we do not change rituals; we hand them down as we have received them from the Fathers.



Filled with the Fathers:

As a Church, we inherited the teachings from the holy Apostles and Fathers, which they received directly from the Lord Jesus Christ. This is known as **Holy Tradition**. Regarding the Holy Fathers, we must:

- 1) understand their **holy lives**,
- 2) **imitate** them,
- 3) ask them to **pray for us**,
- 4) **consult** their works.



As St. Augustine said, “I read the Holy Bible handed down to me through the Church, explained to me by the Fathers, lived by the saints.” Similarly, St. Anthony the Great advised, “Have for yourself a witness from the Holy Bible for every work you perform.” Additionally, we must have faith, “my books are the lives of those who came before me, and when I want to read, I read the word of God.” (St. Anthony) Studying the works and lives of the Fathers is vital for us as Christians, particularly in these times. Their sayings should guide our teaching and preaching; **a church lacking a foundation lacks life**. These Fathers are pillars of unity in thought, and therefore, we should not rely on just one.

Filled with Understanding Perfection:

We need to be aware of our surroundings and the cultural challenges we face, both ecumenically and locally. **Discernment** is key, and we should be filled with the Holy Spirit and His enlightened word. We must embody the love of God for others and build strong relationships with them. The Coptic Orthodox Church offers a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the Holy Scriptures, doctrine, rites and rituals, patristics, and spirituality. This richness equips both the servants and those being served to lead lives of virtue and spirituality as part of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the Church. Let us express gratitude to God for the maturity and growth of our youth and the servants of the Church, who have developed the discernment to distinguish between good and evil.



Sources of the Coptic Orthodox Doctrine:

The Holy Bible:

The Holy Bible is the most significant source and the primary guardian of all teachings in the Church. It holds this primary status because it is the **original declaration of God**. The Holy Fathers dedicated their lives and efforts to understanding, studying, and conveying to us the central theme of the Bible: **the salvation of mankind**.

Church Doctrine:

The concept of “Doctrine”:

Doctrine involves the transmission of teachings that help us comprehend how the Fathers interpreted the faith, religious rituals, and ecclesiastical teachings passed down through generations. **Holy Tradition** is *how we have received the Holy Bible*. As St. Paul states, “*But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered,*” (Romans 6:17). He also says, “*Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you,*” (1 Corinthians 11:2). From the beginning, the Fathers received the Faith and teachings directly from our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ, and they preserved and preached these teachings. The early life of the Church and the early Fathers hold great significance in maintaining the Faith. Before the great schism of Chalcedon, the entire world—both East and West—upheld these doctrines faithfully. The whole Church adhered to the Apostolic Tradition, which has been handed down through generations and centuries.





The Role of Doctrine in Keeping and Interpreting the Christian Faith:

The goal of Christianity is to **live** and **experience** the Faith. It is not possible to truly have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ without embodying and actively living it. This is the fundamental teaching of the Holy Church. As St. Cyprian states, "You cannot have God as your Father unless you have the Church as your Mother."

There is no salvation outside of the Church; it serves as a **haven** and the **ark of salvation**.



Liturgical Services:

The liturgical services of the church are also a vital source of faith and are as significant as ecumenical dogmas. They serve as a **practical interpretation of doctrine**. Generations have prayed these same words of the Liturgy, which express a shared faith in the Spirit of virtue. We must not teach anything that contradicts what we pray in the liturgies. As St. Irenaeus said, "We pray what we believe, and we believe what we pray."



During Liturgical Prayers, We Declare:

- Our faith in the **Holy Trinity**
- Our faith in the **Incarnation** of the Only Begotten Son of God and His work of salvation, His **death** on the Holy Cross, His Holy **Resurrection** on the third day, and His **Ascension** into heaven
- Our faith in the **descent of the Holy Spirit** upon us, who established the Holy Church
- Our faith in His **Second Coming**, the general **resurrection of the body**, and the **judgment** of the world
- Our faith in the **holy sacraments**, especially the essentiality of Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist
- Our faith in the work of the Holy Spirit within us and in the Church
- Our faith in the Holy Virgin Mary as the **Theotokos**, the Mother of God, and the Mother of all the saints

We believe in the intercession of the saints and that we are part of one Church—the **struggling Church**, which consists of those of us **living on earth**, and the **victorious Church**, which includes those who have **gone before us into paradise**. All these teachings are encapsulated in the Creed and in the holy liturgics, which we firmly believe express the pure Faith through prayers and praises to God.

The Lives and Sayings of the Church Fathers:

These are the Fathers who helped interpret the Faith. How must we read the Fathers?

- We must read the original works of the Fathers or trusted translations of such. As stated in 2 Timothy 2:2, *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* Saint Athanasius emphasizes, “Let us examine the Holy Tradition of the One Church. Her Teachings and her Faith, which have been present since the beginning, were given by the Lord, preached by the Apostles, and preserved by the Fathers. Upon this foundation, the Church was established. He who falls away from this is not a Christian and must not be called such.”



- We must study **Patristics**, which researchers have explored and taught, representing the pure Spirit of the Church, her Faith, and her Teachings. We must always work with a spirit of discernment. Romans 2:18 advises, *“and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law.”*
- We must read the **Fathers** who are considered **pillars of the Church**, those who faithfully explained the Faith, supported by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Bible, Holy Tradition, and the teachings handed down from their Fathers. Our Coptic Church does not believe in the infallibility of individuals, as the Holy Bible has noted the sins of fathers, prophets, and saints. We also sin, but blessed is the one who self-corrects and does not continue stubbornly in sin.



The Decisions And Dogmas of the Ecumenical Councils:

These dogmas and decisions supersede all teachings because they were made ecumenically under the guidance of the **Holy Spirit**. Such councils also anathematized those who teach otherwise. St. Paul states in Galatians 1:8, *“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be anathema (accursed).”*

Submitting to Our Faith and Remaining Steadfast in It

The Lord Jesus Christ established His Holy Church upon the rock of the Orthodox faith, as expressed in Matthew 16:18, *“And on this rock, I will build my church.”* He exhorted His disciples to shepherd the people, saying, *“Tend my sheep”* (John 21:16). He urged them to keep the faith and teachings, instructing them to *“Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you,”* (Matthew 28:20).

The Coptic Orthodox Church rejects false teachings; nothing upsets the Church more than false teachings. The struggle of the Fathers is evident as they fought against heresies and warned us about false teachings. They established protective measures around the Faith to **prevent heresies** from entering, to **preserve the Oneness of the Church**, and to **prevent division by handing down the true Faith**—Holy and Pure—to the people according to their age.

The Role of Our Father, the Bishop, in the Holy Church:

- The primary responsibility of our father, the bishop, is to preserve the Faith and pass it down to future generations purely and truly. As stated in 2 Timothy 2:2, *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* This is the promise the bishop makes before the Holy Altar of God during his ordination.



- The bishop must be **skilled in teaching** in a positive and edifying way, demonstrating strength, love, and compassion. According to 2 Timothy 2:23-24, *“But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient.”* He must hold firmly to the faithful Word, as he was taught, so that he can encourage and correct those who oppose him. This is emphasized in Titus 1:9, which states, *“that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”* Revelation 3:2 also advises, *“Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain.”*
- In the understanding of the Church, the Faith is a **treasure** handed down by the fathers and bishops, preserved with great care for those who are faithful and capable of teaching correctly from one generation to the next. Throughout each generation, the Church has been blessed with devoted individuals who can preach the word of God in truth, guided by the Holy Spirit and exemplifying justice. There is no partiality in matters of faith or toward those who oppose it.





Why and How do we Confront False Teachings and Heresies?

Why Confront?

- Some say, why the confrontation? How could the Church of Peace, which should bring about peace in the world and should proclaim the mind of Christ and the depth of the Spirit of love, fight people and heresies and excommunicate them? Isn't this harshness a form of philosophical terrorism? On the other hand, should the Church just leave each person to think and teach as he pleases -- even false teachings, under the umbrella of an open heart? The Lord Jesus Christ Himself warns us during His Sermon on the Mount, saying, *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves,” (Mat 7:15)*. Throughout the ages, our Church has relied on Councils to investigate and judge heresies, excommunicating those who refused to obey the doctrine of the Truth. We applaud the heroes of the Faith who were invested in these Councils and the decisions made by them to excommunicate heresies and anathemize them. They spent their whole lives struggling against false teachings. Some examples of these heroes are St. Athanasius the Apostolic, St. Cyril the Great, St. Dioscorus, the Light of Orthodoxy, St. Samuel the Confessor, who tore Leo's Toma, and others in the history of the Church. These were great fathers who defended the Faith, once delivered to the saints, with their lives. We also must follow in their footsteps and be faithful as they were in keeping the Truth which we have received.

Opposing Heresies is a Biblical Matter

- The unity of the Body of Christ cannot accept heresy. **Rejecting heresies is essential to keeping the unity of the body, the spirit, and the thought.** Heresy destroys the unity of the Church, destroys its peace, destroys its faith and well-being.



- “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple,” (Rom 16:17-18). Thus, **heresy leads to division**. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us saying, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand” (Mat 12:25).

Our Fathers the Apostles Opposed and Confronted Heresies:

- The Holy Apostles **struggled** in spreading the Word of the Gospel and **keeping the true Faith pure without blemish**, so that the Gospel of Christ may not be changed. They stood fast against all those who opposed the Orthodox Faith. “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching,” (2 Timothy 4:2).

How Do We Confront Heresies?

- **Warn** - “And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother,” (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). Another reference is in 1 Thessalonians 5:14 which says, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all”.
- **Avoid** - “Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition,” (Titus 3:10). Other references are found in Romans 16:17 and 1 Timothy 6:5.
- **Rebuke** - “This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth” (Titus 1:13-14).



- **Excommunicate** – “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds,” (2 Jn 1:10-11). In these situations, excommunication is not done out of hatred or vengeance, it is necessary for 2 reasons:
 - The **salvation** of the heretics.
 - To **declare that the Church does not accept the false teachings** of the heretics so that her believers may not follow them and stray away. The Church is not only responsible for keeping the true Faith, but also for keeping her congregation safe from ravenous wolves, who, “feed themselves” (Ezekiel 34:2).
- As the wise man exhorts us, “Cease listening to instruction, my son, And you will stray from the words of knowledge “(Proverbs 19:27)
- Therefore, every Christian must do his part towards his home, his children, and those served by the church, and provide the pure, sound teaching that we have learned and received from our glorious Coptic Orthodox Church, because it was said long ago:
 - ” *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children”* (Hosea 4:6)

We beseech our Lord that He may keep us all in the upright faith, the Coptic Orthodox teachings, holiness, through the leadership of the Holy Spirit unto the last breath.





The Book of 1 Kings

The First Book of Kings is a sequel to the Second Book of Samuel and chronicles the **history of the kings of Israel and Judah over about 100 years**, beginning with the end of King **David's** life, followed by the reign of his son **Solomon**, and extending to Ahab, king of Israel, and **Jehoshaphat**, king of Judah, around **1000 B.C.**

Following a flourishing and stable period under the reigns of David and Solomon, David's descendants failed to maintain the kingdom's unity, and the people began to turn away from God. In response, God sent prophets to warn the kings and the people, encouraging them to repent. However, **few kings of Judah heeded these warnings**, while all the kings of Israel continued in their corruption. This book illustrates the heritage of my fathers.

Purpose of the Book

The First Book of Kings recounts the stories of many kings facing similar circumstances. Some followed the way of the Lord and adhered to His commandments, while many strayed from these teachings, ultimately **leading the people astray** and contributing to the **kingdom's collapse**. It teaches that individuals have the freedom to choose whether to follow spiritual teachings, making excuses for their circumstances unnecessary, as these obstacles did not deter those who remained faithful to the commandments.

This text is not just a historical account of the wars and deeds of the kings, but also provides a **spiritual perspective** on these historical events. The author recognizes God's presence in preserving those who keep His commandments and notes that **God abandons those who stray from Him**.



The division of the kingdom is attributed to the pride of King Rehoboam, reflecting the root cause of many schisms, partisanship, and divisions within the Church. The book highlights the sins of righteous and pious kings while not neglecting the good deeds of wicked kings, which were beneficial to their people. The writer of the book is **most likely the prophet Jeremiah**, based on the writings of the prophets **Gad** and **Nathan**.





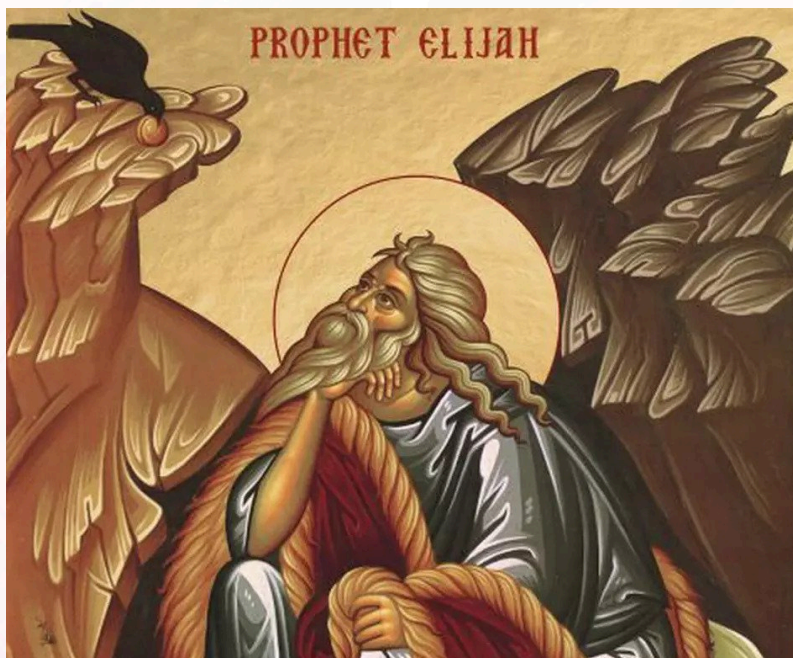
This book consists of 22 chapters, divided into three parts:

- **Chapters 1-11:** The reign of Solomon and the United Kingdom.
- **Chapters 12-16:** The division of the kingdom and the reign of various kings.
- **Chapters 17-22:** The northern kingdom under Jeroboam, which includes 10 tribes, and the southern kingdom led by Rehoboam, which includes the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Our study focuses on chapters 17-22, which feature the story of **Elijah the prophet and King Ahab from the northern kingdom.**

Chapter Seventeen: Elijah the Great Prophet

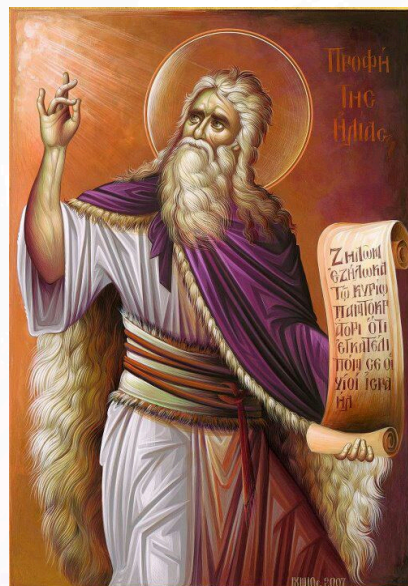
God sent Elijah the Prophet during a time marked by **spiritual decline**, coinciding with Ahab's accession to the throne. Elijah, a hermit living in the mountains, is regarded as one of the greatest prophets of Israel. The Lord prepared him for numerous confrontations, beginning with a clear warning about the cessation of rain: *“And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.’”* (1 Kings 17:1). This was necessary because the people had strayed, believing that Baal, the god of fertility, was responsible for providing rain and goodness.





God arranged for ravens to feed Elijah in the mornings and evenings, providing him with bread and meat while he drank from the brook Cherith, until the brook dried up due to the lack of rain. The Lord then commanded him to go to Zarephath in Sidon—a Gentile city, and the country of Jezebel. Obediently, Elijah went, unafraid of the prophets of Baal who might kill him. There, God prepared a widow to support him, and miraculously, the oil and flour she possessed did not run out until the day the Lord sent rain.

Elijah's name means **"My God is Jehovah"** or **"He is my God."** The term "Tishbite" signifies "the stranger" or "the one who calls for a return to God."



Isn't it remarkable that this widow, although a **Gentile**, faithfully carried out God's commandments? Jezebel came from the same city but was wicked, demonstrating that God has mercy on those from other nations who remain faithful to Him. He commanded the ravens to bring food to Elijah, defying their instincts. God provided for Elijah even in the land of his enemies, showing that He can protect His children no matter the circumstances if they steadfastly adhere to His teachings and commandments. The bread and meat, typically the **food of the affluent**, were provided to Elijah, demonstrating God's care.



Elijah asked the widow to make him a cake first before preparing one for herself and her son. This teaches us to prioritize our commitments, as **Elijah symbolizes God**. “*We ought to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29). The woman believed Elijah’s words and followed his instructions, resulting in her, Elijah, and her household being sustained during a time of famine. However, her son fell ill and eventually died, which led her to express her anger towards Elijah. Still, her anger was justified, as she acknowledged her sins and viewed her son’s death as punishment from God for her iniquities. Elijah prayed to God, asking to bring the boy back to life, and God answered. The boy’s death prompted the woman to confess her sins, while his resurrection affirmed her faith in the true God, as stated in *1 Kings 17:24*: “*The word of the Lord in your mouth is the truth.*”

Though Elijah did not write any prophecies himself, his significance in the Old Testament is far more pronounced than that of those who did. He received great honor, including appearing on the **Mount of Transfiguration** and being taken up to heaven in **a chariot of fire**. Many interpreters believe Elijah is one of the two prophets who will appear in the last days.





Chapter Eighteen: The Confrontation Between Elijah and the Prophets of Baal

After **three years without rain**, the Lord called Elijah to appear before **Ahab**, as God wanted to end the punishment and bring rain to the earth. During this time, Jezebel had killed many prophets of the Lord, possibly capitalizing on Elijah's absence and the drought to gain favor with her pagan gods. Her actions may have contributed to the famine and drought.

In the dire situation in Samaria, God preserved a group of prophets. Among them was **Obadiah**, Ahab's servant, who feared the Lord and had hidden 100 prophets in caves, protecting them with food and water.

Ahab ordered Obadiah to search for valleys and springs to revive their livestock. While on this mission, Obadiah encountered Elijah and recognized him. **Elijah asked Obadiah to inform Ahab that he had found him**. However, Obadiah feared that if he told Ahab and the Spirit of the Lord took Elijah away, Ahab would kill him.

Elijah assured Obadiah that he would present himself to Ahab, and with boldness, he prepared for confrontation. What did Elijah say to Ahab?

The Battle of Carmel:

Elijah instructed Ahab to gather all of Israel at **Mount Carmel**, along with the 450 prophets of Baal and the **400 prophets of Asherah**. They were all dining at Jezebel's table. Elijah took charge, and Ahab had no choice but to follow his orders.

As the people gathered, Elijah rebuked them for mixing the worship of the living God with the worship of the idol Baal. **He challenged them** to decide once and for all whether to worship God or Baal, but the people remained silent.



Elijah then proposed a test: they would each take **two bulls**—one for the prophets of Baal to choose and prepare, and the other he would prepare himself. Both sacrifices would be **placed on wood, but without fire**. Each group would then pray to their respective gods, and the god who answered by sending fire to consume the sacrifice would be recognized as the true God. The people found this proposal agreeable. Elijah asked to bring the prophets of Baal first, and from morning until noon, they called upon Baal, but **he did not respond**. One of the manifestations of their worship was dancing around the altar. At noon, Elijah mocked them and asked them to call out loud, perhaps Baal was in seclusion or on a journey! Or perhaps he was asleep. Indeed, they cried out loud and **cut themselves with swords and spears** until their blood flowed. But no one responded. - In the afternoon, Elijah gathered all the people to him and repaired the ruined altar of the Lord, which Ahab had destroyed, forbidding worship of the Lord. He built an altar of **twelve stones according to the number of the tribes**, and made a channel around the altar with a depth that would hold two measures of seed, which confirms the absence of any natural fire, as the priests of the idols used to hide fire under the wood, and deceive the simpletons, that it had come down from heaven.



Elijah cut the wood, cut the bull, and put it on the wood, and asked them to fill **four jars of water**, and pour them on the burnt offering and the wood, and the trench around the altar was filled with water. Elijah prayed to the Lord, to turn the hearts of His people to Him so that they would stand firm in His way, and not turn aside after the worship of Baal, and the Lord answered, and **the fire of the Lord came down**, and consumed the **burnt offering**, and the **wood**, and the **stones**, and the **dust**, and licked up the **water in the trench**.

*Continue in the things
which you have learned* (2 Timothy 3:14)





When the people saw this, they fell on their faces, saying: **“The Lord, He is God”**, so Elijah asked them to seize the prophets of Baal, and **slaughter them** at the Kishon River. Afterward, the people **repented and returned**, and after the sacrifice was consumed by the fire of the Lord as a sign of God's acceptance of their repentance, there was **rain**. Thus, after the sacrifice of the cross, **the waters of the Holy Spirit were poured out on the Church**.

We notice that Ahab was focused on eating and drinking, while Elijah prioritized praying. Even though God had promised him rain, Elijah did not cease to pray, declaring, *"I give myself to prayer"* (Psalm 109:4).

The hand of the Lord was upon Elijah, causing him to set out for Jezreel, where he arrived before King Ahab, even though Ahab was riding. This demonstrates that Elijah was truly sent by God.

Elijah boldly confronted **King Ahab** and his pagan wife, **Jezebel**. He was unconcerned with earthly authority or leadership; instead, he prioritized **his faith and obedience** to God above all else. His unwavering faith compelled him to challenge the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and in the end, he emerged victorious, leading the people to return to faith in the God of Israel, **the only living God**.





Notes:

- The prophets of Baal repeated the name of their deity in their prayers.
- Restoring the altar signifies a **return to the law of the Lord**, which was practiced on that altar; therefore, Elijah did not build a new one.
- The **twelve stones represented the number of tribes**, symbolizing that, even though the kingdom was divided, they are **united as one people** descended from one father, Jacob, whom the Lord called.
- God gave Ahab many opportunities to repent: first through punishment in the form of a drought, then by performing a miracle with fire and restoring the rain, and finally by allowing Ahab to escape from the army of Aram.

In times of trouble, we must flee to God, not away from Him.

Chapter Nineteen: Elijah's Frustration

Ahab informed his wife, **Jezebel**, that Elijah had killed all the prophets of Baal. In response, she **threatened to kill Elijah** the next day and swore by her gods to carry out her threat.

Elijah fled in fear to Beersheba in the Kingdom of Judah, but he did not seek refuge in God. This is why we find God asking him twice, **"What do you want here?"**—as a form of rebuke. God does not abandon the faithful in their troubles but rather supports and strengthens them, so they do not falter on their way to Horeb, where God reveals Himself.





This moment highlights a **weakness** of the fiery prophet Elijah, confirming that we are all vulnerable and not infallible. Elijah's second moment of weakness occurs when he asks for death, reflecting a state of deep despair. God continually surrounds us, never abandoning us in our struggles. Here, **God addresses Elijah's feelings gently**.

Elijah said to God, *"They have killed all the prophets of the Lord, and left me alone!"* Despair can cloud our vision, making us focus only on what disturbs our thoughts rather than seeing the truth.

The wind, earthquake, and fire signify God's presence that instills reverence in our hearts. However, God speaks to the suffering in a **gentle whisper**, calmly engaging with them to provide peace. The best remedy for despair is to return to God and engage in service.

Elijah wrapped his face in his cloak, signifying **reverence and respect**, much like the **Cherubim** do. The Lord instructed Elijah to appoint two kings: Hazael over Aram and Jehu over Israel. He also commissioned him to anoint the prophet Elisha as his successor.



Elisha's Call:

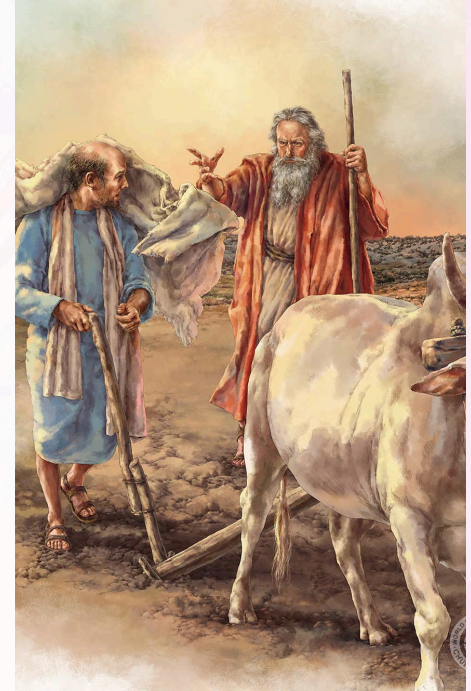
Elijah found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, plowing the field with twelve pairs of oxen. Elijah threw his **mantle** over Elisha, signifying that **he was chosen for discipleship**.



Elisha was under Elijah's protection, receiving **guidance and training** from him. A yoke of oxen refers to a pair linked together to plow the land; possessing twelve yokes of oxen indicates wealth.

Elisha accepted Elijah's invitation but **requested to say goodbye to his family**. Elijah agreed, understanding that this call did not mean severing familial ties. Elisha then returned, slaughtered a pair of oxen, and shared the meat with the people before rising to follow Elijah.

Did you realize that Elisha is among the 7,000 faithful who did not bow to Baal? In every time and place, no matter how evil invades the world, **God keeps faithful servants for Himself**.



Chapter 20: God is Glorified in Elijah

God called Ahab to repentance through various means, including **warnings and miracles**. Now, He allowed **Ben-Hadad**, king of Syria, to besiege Samaria with 32 kings, along with his army, horses, and chariots. Ben-Hadad sent messengers to King Ahab, insulting him and threatening to take everything from him, including his silver, gold, beautiful women, and sons. He even planned to send his servants to search Ahab's house and the houses of his servants to seize everything they found desirable. However, the elders in Israel did not accept this treatment. In response, Ben-Hadad swore by his gods that **he would take even the dust from Samaria**.

Ahab responded with some faith, saying, *"Let not he who girds himself boast as he who loosens,"* meaning that **no one knows the future**. The one who girds himself has prepared for battle, while the one who loosens has completed it.



A prophet assured Ahab that if he fought against this king, he would be victorious. God allowed this to happen out of **His mercy and love**, aiming to lead Ahab to repentance. Ahab demonstrated his faith by believing the prophet's words and asking whom he would conquer. The answer was that Ahab would conquer Israel by God's will.

Ahab began the war with a small number of young men, specifically **232 heads** of provinces, who were not trained for battle. Yet, God is capable of saving both few and many.

Ahab launched the attack at noon, an unusual and sudden time when the king of Aram was in his tents **eating and drinking**. Ahab seemed to underestimate them, ordering that they be captured alive, whether they came out to fight or sought peace. Perhaps he wanted to humiliate them and gain information.



The Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them. The king of Aram fled on a horse rather than a chariot, which was typical for kings, while Ahab dealt a significant blow to them.

Later, the prophet Elijah informed King Ahab that the king of Aram would return to fight him **after a year**, advising him to be strong and prepare himself.



Do Not Boast

The servants of the king of Syria believed that the God of Israel was only the God of the mountains, not of the plains. They thought that if they fought the Israelites in the plain, they would be victorious. They proposed **changing their military leadership**, removing the kings from their positions, replacing them with leaders, and reorganizing the same number of soldiers and chariots that had fallen, preparing to fight on the plain.

As the prophet had foretold, **after a year**, the king of Aram returned with threats and prepared to fight Israel. The number of Israelites was small, almost like two flocks of goats compared to the multitude of Arameans filling the land.

For the second time, **the Lord supported Ahab in his war** against the Syrians so that everyone would recognize that the Lord is the God of both mountains and valleys. The Israelites struck down **100,000 men from the Syrians in one day**. The remaining Syrians fled, with some taking refuge behind the wall of the city of Aphek, which collapsed upon 27,000 of them.

Despite his victory, Ahab **did not thank God nor credit Him** for the triumph. Instead, he made a **covenant** with the king of Syria and **released him**, disregarding the Lord's command to destroy him.

A man from the sons of the prophets disguised himself to appear as if he had just come from battle. He asked his friend to strike him, pretending to be wounded as directed by the word of the Lord, but his friend refused. As a result, a **lion** met his friend and killed him. The prophet then encountered another man and asked to be struck, and the man complied, **wounding him**.



The prophet put a blindfold over his eyes and waited on the road until King Ahab passed by. When the king approached, the prophet confronted him, saying, “I was in the middle of a battle when a man brought me another man, instructing me, ‘Guard this man; if he goes missing for any reason, **your life will be exchanged for his**, or you will pay a talent of silver.’ While your servant was preoccupied, the man disappeared.” After the prophet finished his story, King Ahab responded, “You have judged yourself.” At that moment, the prophet revealed his identity by removing the blindfold. Ahab recognized him as one of the prophets. The prophet then delivered the message from the Lord: “Because you have let go of the man whom God commanded you to destroy (the king of Syria), **your life will be exchanged for his life**, and your people will be exchanged for his people.” Deeply saddened, the king returned to Samaria feeling depressed and distressed.



Ahab's apparent act of mercy may seem noble, but it was wrong because it **contradicted God's command** to eliminate the wicked. Ahab blasphemed God's name by suggesting that God was only a God of mountains, not of valleys. By making a covenant with Ben-Hadad, Ahab broke his covenant with God. He continued to **embrace idolatry**, particularly the worship of Baal, and never fully submitted to the one true God. Ahab did not seek God's counsel, nor did he ask the prophet for guidance on how to handle Ben-Hadad.

It is important to be genuinely merciful to the weak; however, **one should not feign mercy for selfish reasons**. True mercy should be shown for God's sake, not for personal gain or to gain approval from others.



Ahab sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord. He was led astray by his wife, **Jezebel**, and was notorious for indulging in idol worship (1 Kings 21:25-26). Consequently, he became **the most wicked king of the kingdom of Israel**. One of the prophets had foretold that God would grant Ahab a miraculous victory over King Ben-Hadad of Syria in Aphek. However, Ahab did not publicly acknowledge the Lord's mercy, nor did he repent for his sins or change his attitude towards the Lord. Instead of forming a covenant with God, **he allied himself with Ben-Hadad**, whom he called "my brother," after defeating him (1 Kings 20:32).

Chapter 21: The Inheritance of My Fathers

After his victory over Syria, King Ahab felt troubled because **God rebuked him** for allowing Ben-Hadad, the king of Aram, to escape. Seeking to escape the atmosphere of war and his depression, he went to his palace in Jezreel to relax. While there, he noticed a **field** owned by **Naboth the Jezreelite**, a man who was faithful to God and adhered to His laws. King Ahab approached Naboth and asked if he could acquire Naboth's vineyard in exchange for a better vineyard or for its price in silver.

At first glance, this offer seemed fair, but **it conflicted with God's law**, which mandates the preservation of ancestral inheritance. Ahab, however, showed little regard for God or His commandments. Additionally, his request violated the tenth commandment, which states: *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house"* (Exodus 20:17).





Naboth refused to break the Lord's commandment, insisting that he would not sell the land that had been passed down through his family. In response, Ahab became distressed and tossed on his bed, turned away from his face, and refused to eat—a display of weakness that was unbecoming of a king.

Jezebel noticed Ahab's state of despair and asked him what was troubling him. He explained the situation regarding Naboth and his refusal to sell the vineyard that was his ancestral inheritance. In response, **Jezebel assured Ahab that she would obtain Naboth's vineyard for him**, declaring that everyone must submit to the king's will. King Ahab, influenced by his wicked wife Jezebel, allowed her to carry out her plan. Ahab did not discuss how he would acquire the vineyard. Before Jezebel's reprimand, he was completely **submissive to her** and allowed her to manage the kingdom as she wished.

Do not take pleasure in achieving your desires unless they are proper and pursued in the right way.

Jezebel, the evil mastermind, **wrote letters in Ahab's name**, sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders and nobles living in the city of Jezreel. She instructed them to proclaim a fast and to bring Naboth before the people. She asked them to present two men from the sons of Belial, meaning the sons of evil. These men were to **falsely claim** that they had prayed and supplicated to God, and that God had confirmed to them that **Naboth had blasphemed both God and the king**, thus deserving death by stoning.

Indeed, they executed their wicked plan and took Naboth out and **killed him unjustly**. Jezebel then told Ahab to rise and seize the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite freely. Ahab obeyed and went down to Naboth's vineyard to take possession of it.

*Continue in the things
which you have learned* (2 Timothy 3:14)





Do not disobey the commandments of God

Naboth here symbolizes the Lord Jesus Christ, who was wronged and falsely accused, so they killed him, although He was completely innocent. The word of the Lord to Elijah was to go to Ahab, whom he would find in the vineyard of Naboth. So he went, and Elijah spoke to Ahab, saying, *"Have you killed and also taken possession? Thus says the Lord, **'In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall they lick your blood also?'**"* And Ahab said, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" Elijah responded boldly and firmly to Ahab, informing him that God would punish him just as He had punished the wicked kings who came before him. Elijah warned that God would also severely punish Jezebel and all their descendants because they had not followed the commandments and teachings of the Lord, choosing instead to worship idols.

When Ahab heard Elijah's words, he **tore his clothes** as a sign of humility before God. Although Ahab's repentance was only temporary, God recognized his humility and spoke to Elijah, saying that because of Ahab's repentance, He would refrain from bringing evil during Ahab's reign. However, if Ahab's children continued in the path of wrongdoing, **they would face punishment in their time**.





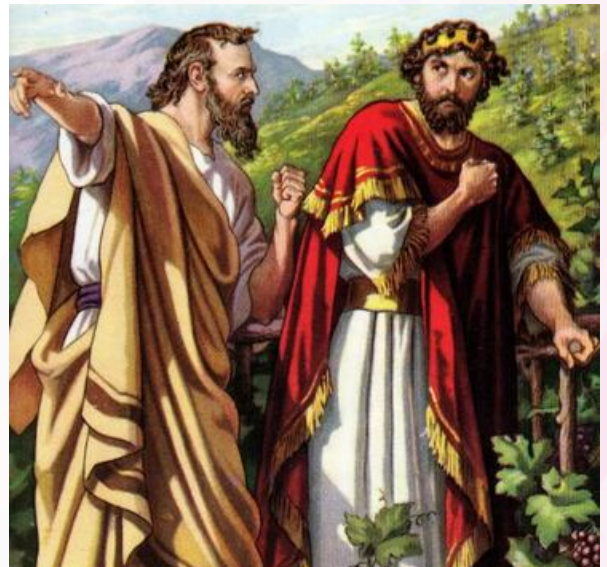
Elijah announced to Ahab the reasons for his sentence- his **killing** of Naboth, and then **usurping** his vineyard (his inheritance of his vineyard) without right. Even though Ahab did not personally order the killing of Naboth, **he was responsible for killing him** because he left the authority to his wicked wife to do whatever she wanted.

Divine justice required two things: Just as Ahab killed Naboth, Ahab would also be killed. And just as the dogs licked the blood of Naboth in Jezreel, the dogs would lick the blood of Ahab, and this is what happened.

Be strong in holding on to life with God, no matter how much the circumstances pressure you or how others try to distract you from it. No matter how logical your justifications are, your relationship with God and the salvation of your soul are more important than anything else.

Chapter 22: The End of Ahab

The Lord gave Ahab a **three-year opportunity** to potentially offer true repentance. However, he used his kingship over Ramoth-Gilead as an excuse to engage in battle against the king of Syria. The prophets of Baal, who had fled from Elijah and numbered about four hundred, **encouraged him to fight.**



Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, visited Ahab, king of Israel. Ahab asked Jehoshaphat to join him in the war to reclaim Ramoth-Gilead. Jehoshaphat initially agreed but then hesitated, prompting him to say, *"Let's inquire today about the word of the Lord."* In response, Ahab gathered the 400 prophets of Baal and asked them whether he should go to Ramoth-Gilead or refrain. They assured him, **"Go up, for victory is certain."**



Feeling uneasy, Jehoshaphat asked Ahab, "Is there not yet a prophet of the Lord here that we may inquire of?" Ahab responded, "There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him **because he does not prophesy good for me, only evil.**" This prophet was **Micah**, the son of Imlah. Ahab then sent a messenger to him to seek his counsel. The messenger informed Micah, "All the prophets have prophesied good things for the king." However, Micah spoke boldly, saying, "I have seen all Israel scattered on the mountains, **like sheep without a shepherd.**" Ahab immediately understood the implication and ordered that the prophet be imprisoned.



Instead of praising the Lord for sending a true prophet to convey the truth, Ahab despised this prophet. However, fearing that Micah's words would come true, **he removed his royal clothing** and disguised himself as a **common soldier**, believing this would prevent the Syrians from recognizing him. He encouraged Jehoshaphat to keep his royal garments on, hoping the battle would turn in Jehoshaphat's favor. Ahab was confident that he could hide from the Syrians, but he did not realize that **he could not hide from God**. Ahab ultimately **died** near Ramoth-Gilead on the first day of battle, struck by a stray arrow that pierced the joints of his armor (34:22). Micah serves as a type of the Lord Jesus, as he speaks only what the Lord instructs him to say, reflecting John 8:28: *"I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things"*



Receive and Hand down

The slogan for this year's festival is based on advice and a commandment from Saint Paul the Apostle to his disciple Timothy: *"continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of"* (2 Timothy 3:14). Let's explore the context of this commandment.

Information about the Message:

This passage is the **second letter** from Saint Paul the Apostle to his disciple Timothy.

Who is Timothy?

Timothy was one of the 14 letters authored by Saint Paul the Apostle and is considered the last message written by the saint, **a few months before his martyrdom**. This letter holds special significance for his most beloved disciple, Timothy, who came to faith through Paul and was ordained by him as the bishop of Ephesus.

Saint Paul longed to meet Timothy in person to deliver his farewell commandments. Concerned that time might not permit a personal visit, he chose to convey his final instructions through this letter. In it, he emphasizes the importance of striving with **strength and perseverance**, advocating for a spirit of resilience rather than despair. He urges Timothy to preserve the true faith and to firmly resist heresies with gentleness and love.





In this Epistle, Paul also reflects on the completion of his life's work, affirming his steadfastness in faith until his final breath as he awaits the **eternal crown**. The letter was written during St. Paul's second imprisonment in Rome around the year 67-68 AD.

Timothy is a Greek name that means "**God-fearing**" or "**honorable of God.**" His father was Greek, while his mother and grandmother were Jewish. Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures since childhood (2 Timothy 3:15), with guidance from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. St. Paul attributes his apostleship and assignment to the will of God, who called him to this service and to endure suffering.

Chapter One

Encouragement to Endure Hardships

According to the promise of eternal life, which the Lord Jesus Christ has assured us, we should **focus on the reward of everlasting joy**. This perspective can help us endure the sufferings we experience. As we do so, we will find that the allure of worldly pleasures **diminishes**, and we will be more likely to reject sin, regardless of its appeal or how insignificant it may seem, in order to stay on course toward our ultimate goal.

(**Verse 2**) Referring to Timothy as "**the beloved son,**" Saint Paul expresses his genuine human feelings spiritually. He shows his affection for his disciple by using the term "beloved."

In seeking "**grace, mercy, and peace,**" Paul prays for Timothy and the church of Ephesus, where Timothy serves as bishop. He asks for divine consolation and help, mercy to cover them, and peace for their hearts, even in the face of external hardships.



(**Verse 3**) Here, St. Paul the Apostle **thanks God** who knows him through his Jewish ancestors. Unlike the Gentiles, who deviated in their beliefs and worshipped idols, Paul appreciates the privilege of knowing God.



When he was persecuting Christians, he did so with a **"pure conscience,"** believing he was serving God. His perspective changed dramatically after he encountered the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus.

"Remember you without ceasing": Saint Paul was disciplined in **constant prayer**, especially for his beloved son, Timothy.

(**Verse 5**) The Apostle commends St. Timothy's faith, describing it as **pure**. Timothy inherited this faith from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, both known for their **faithfulness**, which helped instill this faith in him.

In **Verse 6**, the phrase **"stir up"** means to ignite. The **"gift of God"** refers to the blessings associated with the **sacrament of the priesthood**. The rite of this sacrament involves the bishop **laying hands** on the candidate's head, accompanied by special prayers. Paul reminds Timothy of the grace of the priesthood he received and encourages him to reignite the **Holy Spirit** within him, remaining faithful in his service.

(**Verse 7**) God has not given us a spirit of fear, but rather offers **comfort and support**, especially since Timothy might feel despair due to the many hardships he faces, particularly as a young leader.

The Spirit of power reflects God's strength during difficult times.

Love is demonstrated through genuine care and concern for one's community.

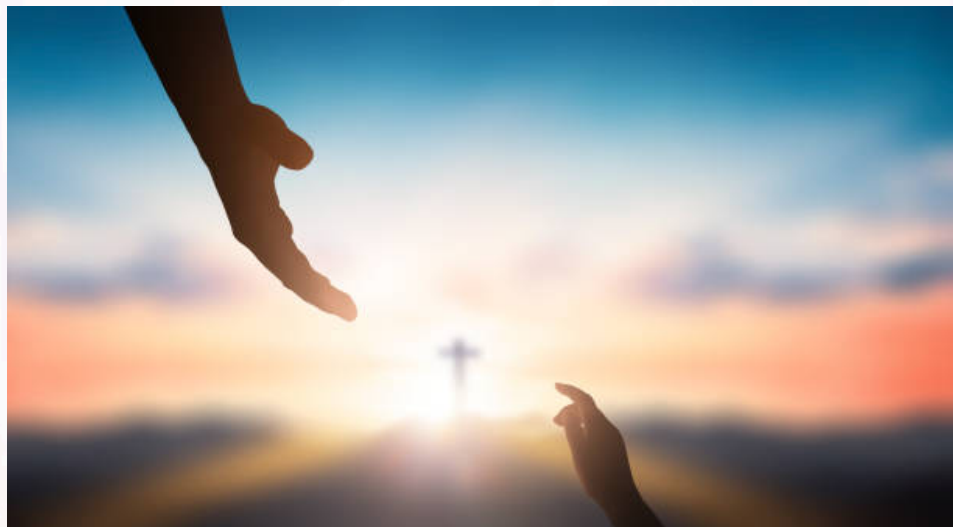
Advice refers to guiding his congregation to avoid heresies and remain steadfast in their faith and spiritual life.



Show appreciation for others' feelings and encourage them with words of praise. Pray for them to provide support during life's challenges, and in doing so, you will also find comfort.

(**Verse 8**) Paul, as a **prisoner**, urges Timothy to remain strong in preaching the crucified Christ. He emphasizes that Timothy should not be ashamed of the humiliation suffered by Christ or of Paul's imprisonment. Instead, Timothy is encouraged to **endure the challenges** he encounters in Ephesus while spreading the Gospel, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit to support him.

(**Verse 9**) Our teacher, St. Paul the Apostle, explains that the salvation you enjoy is not the result of your works, but rather **the grace of God**, shown through His love for you.



(**Verse 10**) Grace has now appeared through the **cross** of our Lord Christ, who **abolished the power of death through His death** and gave us new life in Himself.

(**Verse 11**) The grace of God chose Paul, who was initially resistant to Christianity, to preach the Gospel and become an apostle to the nations, attracting them to believe in Christ.

(**Verse 12**) If you face pains in your life through no fault of your own, accept them for the sake of God, trusting in His help, and He will preserve your soul and your faith.

(**Verse 12**) "**My deposit**" refers to my faith or faithfulness; I trust that God will safeguard my faithful soul until the **Day of Judgment**.



(**Verse 13**) Our teacher, Paul the Apostle, instructs his disciple to hold fast to the sound faith that he taught him, manifesting **practical behavior**.

(**Verse 14**) He also urges him to cling to that faith (the deposit) by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within him, regardless of the challenges and heresies that may arise, trying to make him abandon his faith and beliefs.

(**Verse 16**) Paul the Apostle prays for his children who cared for him during his imprisonment, including **Onesiphorus**, who had passed away at the time of writing the letter. He asks for mercy and grace from God for the family members left behind, as they are without their caregiver. God supports and cares for them.

(**Verse 17**) Onesiphorus believed through the teaching of our teacher, Paul the Apostle. He worked as a merchant in Ephesus and traveled to Rome for his trade. Upon learning of Paul's imprisonment, he inquired about his location and **took care of him**, disregarding the risks of arrest or mistreatment.

Be mindful and flee from everything that may stumble you and distance you from Christ. Beware of teachings foreign to the Church, and hold fast to what you have received.

Therefore, **the Church prays for the departed**, asking for mercy for them, following the example of Saint Paul the Apostle.





Chapter Two

The Fathers with all precision.

Spiritual Struggle

Apostolic Teachings on Divine Grace and Spiritual Struggle

(**Verse 1**) The Apostle emphasizes that **Divine grace** is a powerful source of strength in the spiritual struggle.

(**Verse 2**) Saint Paul the Apostle explains the essence of **tradition**, which involves the delivery and receipt of teachings. The apostles made disciples and entrusted them with what they had received from Christ. Just as St. Paul received the faith from Christ and imparted it to Timothy, St. Timothy is instructed to **carefully pass on this faith** to those who are skilled and competent enough to teach others. A good shepherd makes disciples, capable of serving, preserving, and transmitting the faith.

(**Verse 3 & 4**) Our teacher, St. Paul the Apostle, explains to St. Timothy—and to all of us—that a believer is akin to a **good soldier** in the army of the Lord. This soldier is tasked with fighting, struggling, and enduring many hardships to please the King for whom he serves.

Just as a soldier dedicates his focus and life to the army, a believer must do the same, regardless of any other pursuits.

(**Verse 5**) Believers are also compared to **athletes**, who must adhere to a rigorous training regimen and maintain a disciplined lifestyle to achieve victory. The one who strives must follow the teachings of the Church.

A Christian fights against the devil and sin, all under the leadership of the Lord of Glory, who has called him to service.



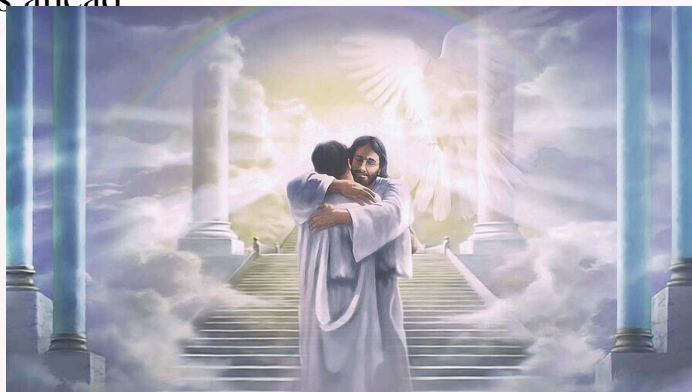
Moreover, he who plows and toils will certainly share in the fruits of his labor, for he deserves his share. Through guidance from his confessor, he must **avoid following personal desires**, lest he be deceived by the devil, even amid a genuine struggle, and ultimately miss his reward. As soldiers in the army of Christ, believers should **listen to the voice of their leader** (Christ) to win their battles, trusting that God will support them with grace to overcome their desires.

(**Verse 6 & 7**) The third analogy likens the **believer to a farmer** who labors to reap a harvest.

(**Verse 8**) St. Paul confirms that those who patiently endure their struggles will reign with Christ in eternity. The "**descendants of David**" refer to **the lineage of the King of kings**. If Christ endured suffering and struggled with patience, then we, too, are called to face our challenges with insight, according to the gospel of St. Paul.

(**Verse 9**) The Apostle encourages Timothy to persevere through hardships, reminding him of the Lord Jesus, who endured the cross and rose in glory. This message serves as **encouragement** for us all, no matter how weak we may feel; we will be **crowned** after our struggles and pains.

(**Verse 10**) The sufferings we endure today are insignificant compared to the **glory of heaven**. Conversely, negligence and indulgence today pale in comparison to the eternal torment that lies ahead





(**Verse 12 & 13**) If we do not remain steadfast in our faith and commitment to service, **God will remain faithful to His promises**, acknowledging those who were devoted to Him on earth while denying those who rejected Him.

(**Verse 14**) When St. Paul refers to "**these things**," he highlights the importance of spiritual struggle and its resultant rewards. Speaking "**before the Lord**," he acknowledges that he communicates in the presence of God, **with strength and truth**. He cautions against discussions that lead to arrogance and division.

St. Paul urges St. Timothy to **instruct the people of Ephesus** on the significance of spiritual struggle. He strongly advises them to reject the harmful philosophical debates propagated by the **Gnostics**, which can distract people from their spiritual lives and lead them into destruction.

(**Verse 15**) Your struggle and toil are indeed a partnership in the cross of Christ; rely on His support during this journey. **Trust in His care** for your efforts and anticipate rewards of comfort on earth and glory in heaven.

(**Verse 16**) Here, St. Paul urges St. Timothy to focus on his own salvation and spiritual well-being, aiming to be pleasing and acceptable to God. He emphasizes the importance of being **a faithful servant** who diligently performs his duties, so he can stand before God with dignity rather than shame.

(**Verse 17-18**) The teachings of the Gnostics are compared to **a disease that corrupts the souls of their followers and ultimately destroys them**. St. Paul provides two examples of Gnostic false teachers: **Hymenaeus and Philetus**. They claimed that only the soul would be resurrected, insisting that there was no need for the resurrection of the body because, in their view, the body is unclean, contemptible, and earthly. Their misguided beliefs led many believers astray.



In contrast, we believe that the first resurrection comes through repentance and Baptism, and if we live faithfully, we will experience the second resurrection on the Day of Judgment, which involves **the resurrection of both body and soul**.





(**Verse 19**) "**The foundation of God**" is faith in Christ. "**The seal**" refers to the Holy Spirit. The term "**Christian**" identifies those who follow Christ. St. Paul reassures St. Timothy and all believers that their **faith is secure if they have received the seal of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Chrismation**. He advises them to reject the deviations from faith and heresies propagated by the Gnostics, assuring them that God knows His true believing children. St. Paul remains patient with the Gnostic heretics within the church but warns against mingling or debating with them.

(**Verse 20**) "**Gold**" symbolizes heavenly life, while "**silver**" represents the word of God. "**Wood**" signifies those who are easily swayed by lust and sin, and "**clay**" symbolizes those who are fragile and easily broken, returning to dust. St. Paul exemplifies **a wicker vessel transformed into gold**, while Judas represents gold that became like wood and was burned.

Heretics divert their focus **from God to earthly**, physical concerns, neglecting their spiritual nature received in baptism. St. Paul likens **the Church to a house containing many vessels**, some honorable and noble, like those made of gold and silver, while others are base, made of wood and clay. Some teachers and individuals hold firmly to their faith and demonstrate **a strong spiritual life, like gold and silver vessels**, while others **risk destruction, like wooden vessels**, or **fragility and breaking, like clay**.

(**Verse 21**) When we enter the **baptismal font**, we shed the old self and are renewed. Upon emerging from baptism, we put on Christ our Savior. After being anointed with Holy Chrism **36 times**, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, a sign of being chosen and under God's protection. While individuals can choose to return to their old ways, they also have the freedom to join the Church and live as the new man. The opportunity for salvation is available to all. **God calls everyone to repent**, for He did not create some to be vessels of gold and others to be of wood; rather, it is up to each individual. God commands us, *"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live"* (Deuteronomy 30:19).



Characteristics of the Sons of God (22-26):

1. **Beware of youthful lusts**, whether through sight, thought, or any association with the wicked who are consumed by impure desires. Each person must be cautious and flee from these temptations with humility.
2. **Practice righteousness** through good deeds, faith, and spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, fasting, reading, partaking in the Holy Mysteries, fostering love, maintaining good relationships with believers, being tolerant of sinners, and striving for peace—even with enemies and offenders. **Call upon the Lord from a pure heart** and seek unity with fellow believers who approach God with sincerity and repentance.
3. **Avoid pointless discussions**, as they lead to quarrels and disputes, fostering enmity even within the Church.
4. **Offer tenderness and encouragement to sinners** until they repent, ensuring that no one stumbles.
5. **Be able to teach others the Word of God** to help them attain salvation.
6. **Show patience and endurance** in the spiritual struggle, so that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

Firmness is an essential quality of pastors and ministers; they must discipline wrongdoers and those who deviate from the faith. This discipline should be accompanied by gentleness and love, allowing the opponents to understand the fatherly care that leads them back to Christ and the Church, helping them abandon error to embrace Divine truth.





Pay attention to your spiritual growth and your love for God, while vigilantly identifying the sources of sin. By doing so, you will maintain your peace, enabling you to serve others and lead them to Christ.

Chapter Three

(**Verse 1**) "**The Last Days**": This refers to the time after you find the Lord Jesus Christ and His redemption, as well as the period leading up to the end of time; the days before the Second Coming of Christ. As we approach the end, we will witness an increase in evil.

Evil will intensify, and ultimately, the deceiver will rise against Christ. Our teacher, St. Paul the Apostle, **warns his disciple about the troubles arising from heretics**, troubles that began during Paul's time and have continued to grow. This encouragement serves to strengthen his disciple against despair amid the resistance and challenges posed by the enemies of faith, both from outside the Church and from within.

This encouragement applies to us as well. **The devil consistently opposes the truth**, but we can find reassurance in the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church, for God declares His love throughout every age. Thus, we should not be troubled by the difficult times or the spread of many heresies, as **God has foretold that these events would occur**.

(**Verse 2-4**) "**People**": This refers to heretics and their followers, as well as all those who distance themselves from the Church and God's commandments.





Here, the apostle outlines the types of evils that befall those who stray from the Church or who follow heretics. One sin often leads to another, resulting in behaviors such as:

- **"Lovers of themselves"** → They are proud.
- **"Lovers of money"** → Those who are self-centered may become aware of their weaknesses and attempt to compensate with wealth and possessions.
- **"Haughty and proud"** → The more money one acquires, the greater the potential for arrogance and conceit.
- **"Blasphemers"** → A person consumed by self-interest, wealth, and pride becomes enslaved to these things. Such individuals may easily deny God and reject His commandments.
- **"Disobedient to parents"** → Those who refuse to submit to God and show love for Him are likely to disrespect their parents and be ungrateful toward them.
- **"Ungrateful"** → He who rejects God and is attached to money is a grumbler, because he always feels wronged and that he deserves more than he has.
- **"Impure"** → If a person is separated from God, he becomes empty, and it is easy for him to fall into impurity, of various types, because he thinks that it satisfies him, so he progresses from evil to evil.
- **"Brutal"** → He who is enslaved to selfishness will naturally be harsh in his speech and behavior towards others.
- **"Without contentment"** → As mentioned, the one who is preoccupied with material things cannot be thankful because they do not satisfy him and always lead him to grumble.
- **"headstrong"** → He who falls into love with self becomes easily judgmental of others.
- **"Dishonest"** → The lover of money and his own self permits evil, and therefore his heart is impure.
- **"Without self-control"** → The actions of the selfish are not only devoid of compassion, but they are also cruel.



- **"despisers of good"** → Being preoccupied with material things, they neglect good deeds
- **"Traitors"** → He who enslaves himself to love and money, easily betrays others.
- **"Slanderers"** → They are not satisfied with doing evil, but they dare to seek material things even if they harm others.
- **"Arrogant"**: That is, haughty
- **"Lovers of self rather than loving God"** → He concludes his speech with the first characteristic he began with, which is selfishness, which makes a person reject God and not love Him.

(**Verse 5**) **"Having a form of godliness"**: Despite their evil qualities, these individuals pretend to be godly, and through their hypocrisy, they close the door to repentance. Our teacher, St. Paul the Apostle, advises his disciple to avoid these heretics. Steer clear of the wicked; it is enough to pray for them.

If you find yourself falling into one of these evil behaviors, quickly seek repentance and cling to God and the Church. This will help you break free from the bondage of sin.



(**Verse 6-7**) These heretics often target young women who are easily influenced. The heretics sought to spread their teachings and found **receptive audiences among emotionally vulnerable women**. They would enter homes to disseminate their beliefs, leading some of these reckless women to accept their teachings. This resulted in a combination of doctrinal deviation and immorality.

Do not be lenient with small sins, as they can lead to more serious ones. Do not be misled by Satan's false justifications, claiming that certain relationships are necessary due to circumstances. Instead, repent quickly and sever all harmful relationships, for the salvation of your soul is of the utmost importance.

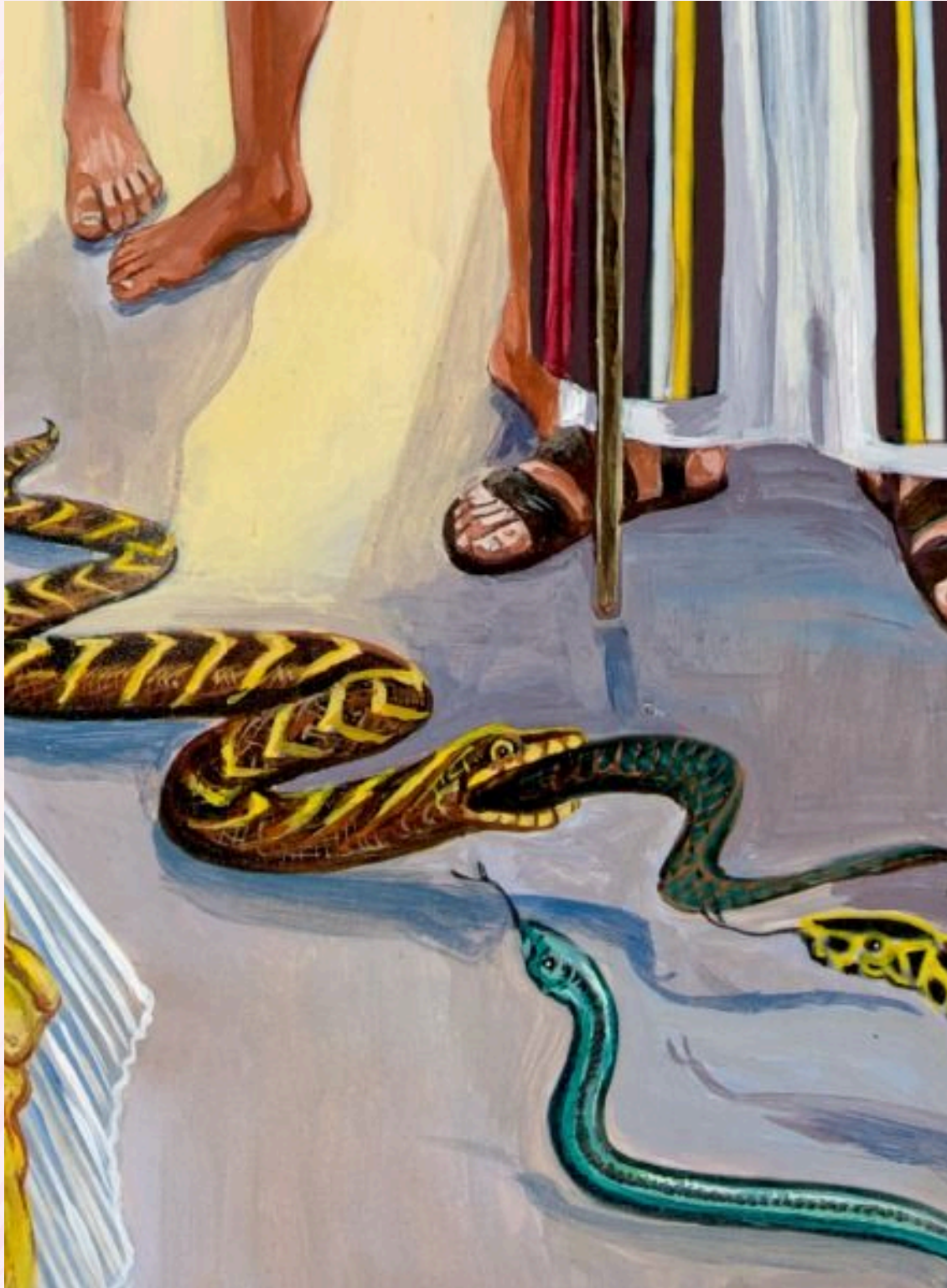
(**Verse 8**) "**Jannes and Jambres**" were the leaders of the magicians whom Pharaoh summoned to oppose Moses. They attempted to match Moses' wonders by turning their staffs into snakes, but ultimately, **Moses' snake consumed theirs** (Exodus 10:7-12). Our teacher, St. Paul the Apostle, learned their names from Jewish tradition that has been passed down through generations.

St. Paul describes these opponents as **corrupt in mind**, meaning they are inclined to evil thoughts that prevent them from accepting faith in God. Because they cling to these wicked thoughts, they are ultimately rejected in terms of their faith.

(**Verse 9**) St. Paul reassures Timothy that the evil deeds of the heretics will become evident, and they will not be able to lead the believers astray within the church. **God will reveal their ignorance**, causing the believers to reject their beliefs.

"Resist the truth" refers to Jannes and Jambres, who, when confronted by Moses, acknowledged their inability and declared, *"This is the finger of God"* (Exodus 8:19).

*Continue in the things
which you have learned* (2 Timothy 3:14)





(**Verse 10**) After discussing the behaviors of these wicked heretics, the Apostle explains to Timothy how the children of God should behave, using his own life as an example. Timothy is encouraged to **follow St. Paul** in his teaching, conduct, intentions (reflecting the love of Christ), faith, adherence to Christ and his doctrine, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings.

This highlights the importance of **church tradition**: faith is not just a set of doctrines written in books, but **a way of life handed down from parents to children**.

(**Verse 12**) St. Paul declares an essential truth: the **persecutions he faced are inevitable for anyone living with Christ**, as the world often resists and persecutes the righteous. However, the righteous need not be disturbed by these persecutions, especially since Christ supports them, bears their troubles, comforts them, and even brings them **joy** amidst their suffering.

(**Verse 13**) **“The impostors”**: These heretics deviate from the truth and even claim that what they say is the truth. **“Deceiving and being deceived”**: They lead people astray and, as a result, **lose their ability to discern**, going even further astray themselves.

(**Verse 14**) The apostle tells his disciple St. Timothy that the key to a person's spiritual strength is to fortify himself with the Word of God, which is a defense against the attacks of deceivers.





The Holy Bible has the power to make him **perfect**, even in the absence of his teacher, the apostle St. Paul (**Verse 15-16**). **"Make you wise"** means to impart wisdom, and this is because **"all Scripture is inspired by God."** It was not written by mere humans but was **inspired by the Spirit of God**, who ensured it was free from error.

(**Verse 21**) At the end of his final epistle, Saint Paul the Apostle offers farewell advice to his disciple as he awaits the end of his life on earth. He urges him to prioritize preaching **"the word,"** for the **Day of Judgment is dreadful**.

Chapter Four: Preaching

(**Verse 3-4**) **"Itching ears"**: This phrase refers to the ears of the wicked, who do not want to hear anything except what pleases them, **due to their fixation on evil**. The Apostle encourages his disciple to seize opportunities for preaching and to reach out to the wicked before their evil increases. Those who refuse to listen to preaching because they are preoccupied with their desires search for teachers who will tell them what they want to hear, **allowing them to persist in their wrongdoing**. These false teachers deceive them into believing they are on the right path.

(**Verse 5**) Among the things he expects from his disciple are:

"Being Aware": being alert to those who deviate and to false teachers, and persevering in teaching them.

"Endure affliction": This means enduring suffering for the sake of Christ, regardless of the trials one faces.



"Do the work of an evangelist": This involves caring for all souls.

"Fulfill your ministry": This includes preaching, visiting those who are far off, and strengthening the believers.

If your heart is filled with the love of God, you will be concerned about serving those around you and encouraging them to connect with Christ and the Church. If they refuse, you will continue to pray for them.

(Verse 6) "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering": In the Law of Moses, when offerings were made to God, **wine was poured over them**. St. Paul likens himself to wine poured onto the sacrifice of service, meaning that his life is being poured out completely for the sake of serving God. **"The time of my departure"**: St. Paul senses that he is approaching **martyrdom**, ready to be freed from the bonds of the body and to rise to God.

(Verse 7-8) He reassures and encourages his disciple that he has struggled and lived for Christ and now expects to receive the **heavenly crown**; this crown is prepared for Paul and all believers.

"I have fought the good fight": This shows the significance of the spiritual struggle he undertook according to the teachings of the Church, supported by God's grace.





(**Verse 11**) “**Luke**” is the author of the Gospel named after him and the Book of Acts of the Apostles. He was one of St. Paul's disciples and accompanied him on most of his journeys. He remained with St. Paul and supported him during his final imprisonment in Rome.

St. Mark joined St. Paul on his first missionary journey and later preached in North Africa and Egypt. St. Paul felt he needed Mark, so he asked Timothy to bring him with him. This demonstrates his love and trust in St. Mark, as **he intended to strengthen the believers in Rome** with their support after his departure, relying on Timothy, Mark, and Luke.

(**Verse 12**) “**Tychicus**” was one of St. Paul's disciples (Acts 20:4) who was with him during his **first imprisonment in Rome**. St. Paul sent him to Ephesus to lead the church in place of St. Timothy, its bishop, while he accompanied him in Rome.

(**Verse 13**) “**Books, especially the parchments,**” refers to **written materials** made from leaves or animal skins, containing some of the books of the Holy Bible.

(**Verse 14 & 15**) “**Alexander the Copper**” opposed St. Paul and incited many against him. St. Paul bore this with wisdom and cautioned Timothy against Alexander's evil deeds, as he resisted all who preached Christ.

(**Verse 16**) “**My first defense**” indicates that **St. Paul faced trials** during his first imprisonment in Rome in 62 AD, and no one stood by him.

“**It is not counted against them**” shows St. Paul's paternal nature; he seeks to **excuse them for their weak faith** and asks God to forgive them out of love.



(**Verse 17**) St. Paul testifies that **God stood with him and strengthened him**, allowing him to complete his preaching. His goal was to continue preaching in Rome, and his imprisonment provided him with the opportunity to share the message of Christ with everyone who visited him.

“The mouth of the Lion” refers to either **Nero or Satan**.

(**Verse 18**) St. Paul trusts that God can protect him amidst all dangers and even safeguard his life from sin, as indicated by the phrase **“from every evil work”** until he reaches the **eternal kingdom**.

(**Verse 19**) **“Priscilla and Aquila”**: Prisca is another name for Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, who were **partners** with St. Paul in his ministry.

“House of Onesiphorus”: This refers to one of Paul’s disciples who **assisted him in his work** and has since passed away; St. Paul asks Timothy to greet his family.

(**Verse 20**) **“Erastus”** was also one of St. Paul’s disciples.

Trophimus: one of the apostles and a disciple of St. Paul, accompanying him on his **second missionary journey**.

In **verse 22**, the letter concludes with a request for God’s grace and the presence of the Lord Christ for his beloved disciple. This companionship is the greatest blessing, as it signifies **God's support and strength in the lives of His children**.

Additionally, we should strive not to condemn anyone. Instead, we should **praise their virtues** and be mindful of their feelings as much as possible. By reflecting on God's mercy towards us, we can better show compassion to all.

*Continue in the things
which you have learned* (2 Timothy 3:14)





Fall and Rise

God Created Man

1. Creation of Man

God created man after **He had prepared everything in heaven and on earth for him**. Then God said, *"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."* So, *God created man in His own image; in the image of God, He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth" (Genesis 1:26-28). "And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).*



2. He Gave Him a Commandment

The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden and placed the man whom He had formed there **to tend and keep it**. The Lord God commanded the man, saying, *"Of every tree of the garden, you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for on the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die"* (Genesis 2:17).



3. Violated the Commandment

However, the man was **tempted by the serpent**. Eve took off the fruit and ate, then gave it to her husband, who also ate. Adam fell because he violated the commandment. *"Then to Adam, He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it'"* (Genesis 3:17).

4. The Fall of Humanity

When our first parents fell into sin, the entire human race fell with them, and **we inherited original sin**. As Adam is the father of all humanity, he contained every one of us within him. Thus, original sin passed from Adam to all his descendants. Consequently, **the sentence of death fell upon us** because the Lord had commanded Adam and Eve, saying, *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat, for on the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die"* (Genesis 2:17).



Corruption has afflicted our human nature. After our nature was created in the image of God, embodying righteousness, godliness, purity, holiness, immortality, and freedom, it quickly fell and **became polluted and corrupt**.

Therefore, two important things needed to happen:

1. **Lifting** the death sentence from humanity.
2. **Renewing** the fallen nature of man and restoring it to its original form. For this reason, He was incarnated to redeem us.



Incarnation

Our Coptic Orthodox Church believes that Jesus Christ is God the Word Incarnate, possessing both **complete Divinity and complete humanity**. His Divinity was united with His humanity without mingling, confusion, or alteration. This union is perfect, hypostatic, and of one essence.

His Divinity did not part from His humanity for **a single moment**, nor even for a twinkling of an eye. The union of the two natures—Divine and human—occurred in the womb of the Virgin at the moment of the Angel Gabriel's annunciation to the Holy Virgin Mary.

The term "incarnation" means **"God incarnate,"** not a human becoming divine. The difference between these two concepts is significant, as it is impossible for a limited human being to become an unlimited God. However, God can take on a human body and appear among us, as **He is capable of all things**.

The incarnation of God is logical and possible; it does not conflict with God's power, holiness, or wisdom.





The Doctrine of Incarnation and Redemption in the Divine Liturgy

These three concepts are foundational:

- "Holy, holy indeed, O Lord our God, who formed us, created us..."
- "He was incarnate and became man and taught us the ways of salvation."
- "He rose from the dead on the third day. He ascended into the heavens..."

The Liturgy explains the story of the creation of man, his **fall through the temptation of Satan**, and God's concern for him by sending holy prophets. It also recounts the Incarnation of God the Word, His crucifixion for our redemption, His death and burial in the grave, His glorious resurrection from the dead on the third day, His ascension into heaven, and His sending of the Holy Spirit. This leads to the establishment of the Holy Church.

We await His Second Coming, which will be full of glory, when He will judge the world with justice and reward each person according to their deeds.

Was Incarnate and Became Man

Great is the mystery of godliness: *"God was manifested in the flesh"* (1 Timothy 3:16). The Son was not only incarnated but also became fully human. This distinction is important in our Creed. There is a difference between "incarnation" and "humanization." **Incarnation** can refer to any physical embodiment, while **humanization** specifically means that the incarnation takes the form of a complete human being. In other words, He assumed a human body and complete human nature. The Lord embraced full human nature—body, spirit, soul, and mind—because He "was like us in all things except sin alone" (Gregorian Liturgy).



Redemption

The Lord was incarnate to redeem us. Because of the original sin we inherited from Adam and Eve, along with our actual sins, we need a Savior.

So, what does God want to save us from?

- The sentence of death: "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).
- The corruption of nature: "They have all turned aside" (Romans 3:12).

Q: How does He save us?

He saves us by suffering and dying on our behalf, thereby **freeing us from the penalty of death**. *"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). He shed His blood for us and purifies us with **the precious blood He offered on the cross**: *"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7).

Q: Why do we baptize infants if they have not yet sinned?

We baptize infants because they are **born with original sin**, also known as ancestral sin (the sin inherited from their ancestors, beginning with our father Adam). As St. Paul the Apostle states: *"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because all sinned"* (Romans 5:12). Adam's disobedience introduced sin into the world, affecting the entire human race from **Adam to the end of time**.





Characteristics of the Redeemer

1. **To be Human:** The Redeemer must be **human** because it is humanity that has sinned.
2. **To Die:** The necessity of **death** is clear in scripture: “*for the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23).
3. **To Be Unlimited:** Since Adam's punishment is **unlimited**, the Redeemer's nature must also be unlimited, for Adam's sin is directed toward the infinite God.
4. **To Be Without Sin:** If the **Redeemer** were a sinner, He would need redemption Himself.
5. **To Be the Creator:** The Redeemer must be the Creator to **renew the human nature** that was corrupted by sin. This renewal is a divine work that only God can accomplish.



By **His humanity**, the Redeemer fulfills the first two conditions (being human and able to die). Through **His divinity**, He meets the last three conditions (being unlimited, without sin, and the Creator).



The Lord has given us a continuation of the work of redemption through the **Eucharistic Sacrifice**. This sacrament serves as an extension and remembrance of the Cross of Christ, involving the same most holy Body and Blood of Christ. The Blood of Christ bestows many blessings upon us, including:

- **Forgiveness**: As stated in Hebrews 9:22, "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission."
- **Purification**: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).
- **Sanctification**: "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).
- **Confirmation**: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56).
- **Eternal Life**: "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54).

Ritual Practices During the Liturgy

During the Liturgy, when the priest says, "was incarnated and became Man," he places a **spoonful of incense into the censer**. This act disperses the beautiful scent of the incense, which serves as a reminder of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ within the womb of the Virgin Mary. **The censer symbolizes St. Mary**, while the **burning fire inside it represents the divine fire** that dwelt in her womb when the Holy Spirit descended upon her and purified her.

Saint Athanasius (the good teacher) provides a fitting analogy: The Lord's descent to us in His incarnation is like a teacher who lowers himself to the level of young students rather than waiting for them to come to him to grasp what he means.

Church readings are an integral part of our worship. The Coptic Orthodox Church is a Biblical Church that reads the Holy Bible, lives it, and incorporates it into all its liturgies and ritual prayers.



For instance, in the prayers of the Divine Liturgy, **the Holy Bible is a major component of our worship**. The Church teaches us that the Lord is present on the altar, where His Most Holy Body and Blood reside, and is also present through His Word in the readings. The Divine Liturgy includes nine readings (chapters) from the Holy Bible, which are as follows:



1. **Vespers Psalm**: from the Psalms
2. **Vespers Gospel**: a passage from the four Gospels
3. **Matins Psalm**: from the Psalms
4. **Matins Gospel**: a passage from the four Gospels
5. **The Pauline Epistle**: a portion from the 14 epistles of Saint Paul the Apostle
6. **The Catholicon**: a portion from the 7 Catholic epistles
7. **The Praxis**: a passage from the Book of Acts
8. **Liturgy Psalm**: from the Psalms
9. **Liturgy Gospel**: a passage from the four Gospels

The Synaxarion

The Synaxarion illustrates how the saints lived the teachings of the Gospel, serving as **perfect models for us to follow**. It encourages us to reflect on their way of life and to imitate their faith and works.

All nine readings of each day **focus on a central theme** referred to as the “topic.” The Coptic Orthodox Church provides a rich program during the Divine Liturgy through the readings presented throughout the Coptic year. These readings, with their beautiful and harmonious arrangement, along with the skillful selection of chapters from the Holy Bible, complement each other intricately. They are considered an **integral part of Church worship**.



The readings form the first part of the Divine Liturgy, known as the Liturgy of the Word, which is followed by the second part, the Liturgy of the Faithful. The texts for both parts are derived from the Holy Bible.

It is important to **attend the liturgy on time and listen attentively** to the Church readings. Let's make an effort to arrive early, engage with them, and approach them with a spirit of prayer. As our good Savior says, *"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you"* (John 15:3).

Katameros Books

The books containing the aforementioned readings are called the Katameros, a Greek term meaning **"according to the day."** They consist of daily readings arranged by date.

There are four books in the Katameros:

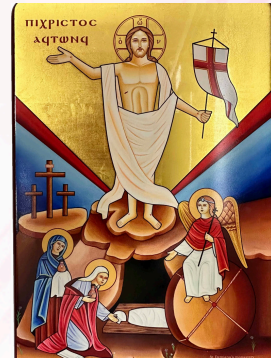
1. **Katameros of the Days:** Contains readings for **each day** throughout the Coptic year, including Sundays.
2. **Katameros of Great Lent:** Includes readings for **Great Lent and the fasting of Nineveh.**
3. **Katameros of the Holy Pascha:** Contains readings for **Holy Week.**
4. **Katameros of Holy Pentecost:** Covers readings from the **Feast of the Resurrection to Pentecost.**





The Katameros of the Days is divided into two parts:

- **Katameros of Sundays:** Dedicated to Sundays, when the **Church celebrates the Resurrection of the Lord** from the dead, focusing on the work of the Holy Trinity in the Church.
- **Katameros of the Days:** Focuses on **occasions celebrated in the Synaxarion** for that day, which may include the feasts of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, angels, martyrs, saints, monks, and nuns, among others.



Katameros of the Days:

The daily readings focus on the feasts and commemorations of the feasts of angels, martyrs, fathers, and saints...for **every day of the Coptic year** (as mentioned in the Synaxarion).

The Church does not offer different readings according to the number of days in the year but **only readings for 55 days** (special readings) and the rest are called “referred days” where similar occasions are combined together, and one reading is offered to each group of them, those 55 readings cover all similar occasions.

Since the Synaxarion of one day could combine the commemoration of more than one saint, the Church saw that the **special readings should be focused on one of them only**, and that each of the great saints should be distinguished by special chapters that are read on the day of his or her commemoration, and that the same chapters should be read on the feasts of similar saints. From here arose the system of special days and the referred days, meaning the special days are those that are essential to the occasion of the day, and their number, as we mentioned, is 55. However, if similar occasions occur, the same readings are read, and they are called referred days.



Arrangement of church readings

Readings for the Major and Minor Feasts of our Lord Jesus Christ, each of which is **7**, and each feast has its own readings.

Major Feasts of the Lord

- The Annunciation (**Paremhotep 29**)
- The Nativity of Christ (Christmas) (**Koiahk 29**)
- The Epiphany or the Baptism of Christ (**Tobe 11**)
- Palm Sunday
- Feast of Resurrection
- Ascension
- Pentecost



Minor Feasts of the Lord

- The Circumcision of our Lord (**Tobe 6**)
- The Entrance of our Lord into the Temple (**Meshir 8**)
- The First Miracle of our Lord Jesus at Cana of Galilee (**Tobe 13**)
- Maundy Thursday
- Thomas Sunday
- The Escape of the Holy Family to Egypt (**Pashons 24**)
- The Transfiguration of Christ (**Mesore 13**)



Note: The selected readings make it clear that the celebrated person was indeed **a living Gospel**, an exemplary model of love for Christ, and obedience to the commandment.



1. Readings for the feasts of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God

Special Day	Occasion	Gospel reading of the Liturgy	Gospel content
Pashons 1	The birth of the Virgin Mary	Luke 1: 36-56	The visit of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth
Referred days where the same reading of Pashons 1 is read:			
Kiahk 3	The Virgin Mary's presentation in the temple	<u>Same readings of the special day of Pashons 1</u>	
Tobe 21	The Dormition of the Virgin Mary		
Paone 21	The establishment of the first church after her name		
Mesore 16	The apparition of her body to the Apostles		

Note: When we open the Katameros to look up the readings, it is noted that Pashons 1 readings should be read.



2. Archangel Michael

Special day	Occasion	Gospel reading of the Liturgy	Gospel Content
Hathor 12	Feast of Archangel Michael	Matthew 13: 23- 43	The work of the angels on the judgement day
The referred day is Paone 12, where the same reading of Hathor 12 is being read.			

Note: On Paone 12, we commemorate Archangel Michael, the departure of St. Justus, and the departure of St. Kyrillos (Cyril) the second, and we read Hathor 12 readings.





3.The Prophets and the righteous

Special day	Occasion	Gospel reading of the Liturgy	Gospel Content
Thoout 8	Commemoration of the dormition of the prophet Moses	Matthew 23: 14- 26	The Savior's response to the requests of the prophets and the righteous
This readings are repeated 20 times per year. For example:			
Thoout 6	Commemoration of the martyrdom of the Prophet Isaiah	Same readings of the special day	
Mesore 4	Commemoration of the Dormition of King Hezekiah		

Note: On Thoout 6, we commemorate the prophet Isaiah's Dormition and read Thoout 8 readings.





4.The Twelve Disciples

Special day	Occasion	Gospel reading of the Liturgy	Gospel Content
Epep 5	The martyrdom of the apostles Peter and Paul	Matthew 10: 1-15	Jesus Christ sent his disciples to preach.
Referred days are 9, and examples of those days are:			
Hathor 18	The Martyrdom of St. Philip the Apostle	Same readings of the special day	
Kiahk 4	The Martyrdom of St. Andrew the Apostle.		

Note: On Hathor 18, we commemorate the martyrdom of saint Philip the Apostle and read Epep 5 readings.





5.The Seventy Apostles

Special day	Occasion	Gospel reading of the Liturgy	Gospel Content
Tobe 1	The martyrdom of St. Stephen the Archdeacon	Luke 10: 1-20	Commissioning of the seventy disciples.
Examples of referred days are:			
Paope 26	The Martyrdom of St. Timon	Same readings of the special day	
Paremhote 19	The Martyrdom of St. Aristobulus		

Note: On Paope 26, we commemorate the martyrdom of St. Timon, one of the seven deacons, and read Tobe 1 readings.





6.The Martyrs

The Martyrs are divided into 6 groups :

1. The Prince of the Martyrs
2. Martyrs of the Coptic Church
3. Martyrs of the Eastern Church
4. Mangled (Sawn) Martyrs
5. Group Martyrs of the Eastern Church
6. Martyrs of the One Church



Special day	Occasion	Gospel reading of the Liturgy	Gospel Content
Hathor 15	The martyrdom of St. Mina the wonderworker	Luke 11: 53, 12:12	Do not be afraid of those who kill the body
Referred days are 9, and examples of those days are:			
Meshir 6	The Martyrdom of St. Abakir and St. John	Same readings of the special day	
Epep 24	The Martyrdom of St. Abanoub of Nehisa		

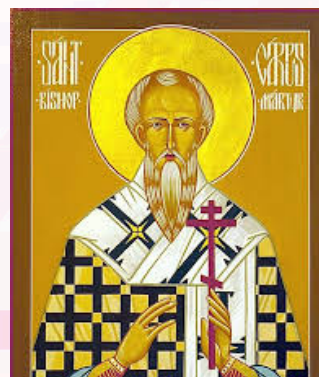
Note: On Paope 26, we commemorate the martyrdom of St. Timon, one of the seven deacons, and read Tobe 1 readings.



7.The Patriarchs

Patriarchs of the Coptic Church:

Special day	Occasion	Gospel reading of the Liturgy	Gospel Content
Hathor 29	The Martyrdom of St. Peter, the Seal of the Martyrs, 17th Pope of Alexandria	Matthew 16: 13- 19	Lord Jesus Christ question to his disciples: “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”
Referred days are:			
Paope 16	The Departure of St. Agathon, 39th Pope of Alexandria.	Same readings of the special day	
Paope 18	The Departure of St. Theophilus, 23rd Pope of Alexandria		





Patriarchs of the Catholic Orthodox Church:

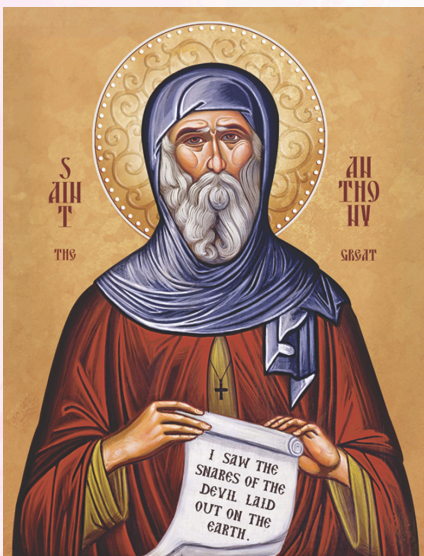
Special day	Occasion	Gospel reading of the Liturgy	Gospel Content
Hathor 17	The Departure of St. John Chrysostom (Golden Mouth), The Patriarch of Constantinople	John 10: 1-16	The Good Shepherd
Referred days are:			
Meshir 14	The Departure of St. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch	Same readings of the special day	
Epep 3	1. The Departure of St. Kyrillos (Cyril) the First, the Twenty-Fourth Pope of Alexandria.		

Note: On Meshir 14, we commemorate the departure of St. James (Yacobus), 50th Pope of Alexandria, and St. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, and read Hathor 17 readings.



8.Monks

Special day	Occasion	Gospel reading of the Liturgy	Gospel Content
Tobe 22	The Departure of St. Anthony the Great (Antonius), the father of all monks	Luke 12: 32-44	Fear not, little flock
Referred days are:			
Paope 24	The Departure of the Righteous Father Abba Hilarion.	Same readings of the special day	
Pashons 19	The Departure of Abba Isaac, the Priest of El-Qalali (Cells).		



Note: On Paope 24, we commemorate the departure of Father Abba Hilarion, and read Tobe 22 readings.



9.The Holy Virgins

Special day	Occasion	Gospel reading of the Liturgy	Gospel Content
Tobe 30	The Martyrdom of Saints Pistis, Helpis, Agape, and Their Mother, Sophia	Matthew 25: 1-13	The parable of the wise virgins
Referred days are:			
Paremhotep 15	The Departure of St. Sarah the nun.	Same readings of the special day	
Thoout 20	The Departure of St. Theopista.		

Note: On Paremhotep 15, we commemorate the departure of St. Sarah the nun, and read Tobe 30 readings.





Comments:

1- **A single theme** connects the readings of each day's Liturgy, including the Vespers Psalm, Vespers Gospel, Matins Psalm, Matins Gospel, Pauline Epistle, Catholic Epistle, Praxis, and the Liturgy Psalm and Gospel. **These readings are linked to the Synaxarion of the day.** However, here, we focus specifically on linking the Synaxarion to the Liturgy Gospel.

2- When we hear the Synaxarion of the day, we can **anticipate which chapter** of the Gospel will be read.

3- If **Hathor 29** falls on a Sunday, we instead read the **Paremhotep 29** reading as a commemoration of the Annunciation.

Our Coptic Orthodox Church offers us a rich spiritual nourishment each day, honoring the righteous martyrs and saints. Thus, we should follow the church readings with interest and a spirit of prayer daily, so we may appreciate the beauty and spirituality of the rites of our glorious church.





A Faithful Guardian: The Rock of Faith and Steadfastness in Teachings

His Upbringing:

Pope Severus was born in 459 AD in the city of Pisidia in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey) to Christian parents. His family was **wealthy**, with his father being a member of the city's senate. He had two brothers. After his father's death, his mother sent him and his older brother to Alexandria to further their studies in science, philosophy, Greek, and Latin.

Severus then went to Beirut to study law, where he **excelled and gained admiration** from his peers. Everyone expected him to achieve great success. Upon completing his law studies, he returned to his homeland and worked as a lawyer. Severus also **advanced greatly in his spirituality**, fasting daily and spending much of the night in church.



His Visit to the Holy Land and His Monasticism:

He traveled to Jerusalem to visit the holy sites, where he felt a deep longing for monastic life. **In 488 AD**, at the age of 29, he joined the Monastery of St. Leontius in Palestine.

He yearned for a life of solitude, leading him to leave the monastery and **isolate himself in the desert**, dedicating his time to worship and study. Due to his illness, he went to the Monastery of Saint Romanus in Palestine and remained there.

Despite his **health challenges**, Saint Severus worked diligently and encouraged the monks to engage in manual labor. Many monks predicted that he would **become a guardian of the true faith and the Church**, shepherding significant figures in Antioch (Syria) and beyond. His reputation grew, attracting numerous priests and monks who sought his guidance on interpreting the Holy Bible and Church doctrine.

After a considerable time, he settled at the Monastery of St. Romanus. Having inherited a substantial fortune from his parents, he took his share and generously **distributed part of it to the poor**. He established a monastery near Gaza in Palestine, drawing many to him as potential disciples and inspiring numerous individuals to embrace monastic life.





His Resistance to Heresies:

When he observed the numerous conflicts the Church faced due to heretics straying from orthodox beliefs, he became **dissatisfied with any alteration to the faith** he had received from the Church Fathers. Consequently, he emerged from his seclusion to defend the faith and wrote many letters addressing their erroneous ideas.

He actively resisted various false teachings and heresies, forcefully responding to anyone promoting doctrines contrary to Orthodox beliefs, while clarifying the implications of their erroneous actions. Among the false teachings he encountered was the assertion from the so-called "**Council of Chalcedon,**" which claimed that the **divinity of Jesus Christ was separate from his humanity**, suggesting that Jesus the human was distinct from Jesus the God—a heresy associated with **Nestorius**. This claim was entirely rejected by our Orthodox Church, which upholds the belief in "one nature of God the Incarnate Word," acknowledging a **union of two natures**. In the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, there was a complete union between the divine nature and human nature, "without mixing, blending, or change." Therefore, the Lord Jesus is fully God and fully man, possessing all attributes of humanity and all attributes of divinity.





How could Jesus be both God and man at the same time?

To illustrate this, consider a doctor who graduates from medical school and then becomes an officer in the army simultaneously. Does this mean he is no longer a doctor? Of course not. **He is both a doctor and an officer at the same time**; in this case, he is a medical officer.

Similarly, Jesus is one person who possesses **all the attributes of God** and **all the attributes of humanity**. This means that when He performed miracles or taught, He did so with His divinity united with His humanity because He is God incarnate.

When He ate, slept, suffered, cried, and so on, He did all of this with His humanity linked to His divinity. When He was incarnated from the womb of the Virgin Mary, **He took on a body just like ours**; He experienced tiredness, hunger, and thirst—resembling us in every way except for sin.

Thus, we understand that the Lord Jesus has one nature that results from the union of His two natures (human and divine), which were never separated. His divinity never left His humanity. Therefore, we refer to Him as the **Incarnate Word**, embodying one nature.

His ordination as Patriarch:

In 512 AD, Severus was ordained as Patriarch of Antioch (Syria) and took the name Pope Severus. At the time of his ordination, a beautiful fragrance filled the air, leading many to believe that **the angels joined in the celebration**.



Following his ordination, a tradition existed between the Church of Antioch and the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt, **both of which reject the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon**. According to this tradition, the Antiochian Patriarch would send a letter to the Alexandrian Patriarch, affirming his faith and the Orthodox teachings received from the Apostolic Fathers. Indeed, after his ordination, Pope Severus sent a letter to the Alexandrian Patriarch, in which **he clarified his rejection of all heresies and false teachings, affirming his commitment to the Orthodox faith**. The two Patriarchs continued to mention each other in the prayers of the Fathers during the Divine Liturgy, a practice that endures to this day.

Troubles and Persecutions:

Pope Severus faced **numerous persecutions** for defending the orthodox faith. At that time, **Emperor Justinian I** ruled the Roman Empire and did not adhere to the Orthodox faith. He issued an order recognizing the Council of Chalcedon and its decisions, subsequently persecuting those who did not accept them. The emperor summoned Pope Severus to meet with him, **attempting to persuade him to abandon his Orthodox faith** in favor of the Council of Chalcedon's teachings. Severus steadfastly refused.

As the persecutions intensified, Saint Severus fled to Egypt, where he remained for **20 years**, except for a brief visit to Constantinople. During his time in Egypt, he cared for his people and sent them letters to strengthen their commitment to the Orthodox faith.

After Justinian I, **another emperor** who shared the same beliefs, summoned Pope Severus, **demanding that he renounce his Orthodox faith** in favor of the Council of Chalcedon. When they met, the emperor challenged him, asking, “Are you Severus who despises the Church of God?” The saint courageously replied, “No. It is you, O Emperor, who have abandoned your true Orthodox Christian faith as received from our fathers, which Emperor Constantine believed in. You have accepted an incorrect faith and confused the entire world.” Despite the emperor's attempts to persuade him to abandon his beliefs, he failed and ultimately decided to **arrest Severus**.

*Continue in the things
which you have learned* (2 Timothy 3:14)





Empress Theodora, the wife of the emperor, firmly **believed in the Orthodox faith**. She urged Pope Severus to flee in order to strengthen his community against the emperor's persecution. Initially, he refused to leave. However, under the insistence of the empress and his devoted followers, **he ultimately fled Constantinople for Egypt**, where he remained until the end of his life. Due to his profound humility, he wandered from place to place and from monastery to monastery, **disguising himself as a simple monk**. God performed many signs and wonders through him.



Reasons for the Steadfastness of Saint Severus of Antioch:

1. He believed that **preserving the purity of the Christian faith** was a fundamental duty for every believer. His deep love for the faith drove him to defend it with all his strength and determination.
2. **The Holy Bible served as his primary reference** for everything related to faith; anything that contradicted its teachings was deemed a heresy that must be rejected.
3. He recognized the **critical importance of preserving the pure faith**, understanding that any deviation could lead to the loss of Christian identity.
4. Saint Severus was one of the most prominent defenders against heretics who sought to distort the faith and pure doctrine. He **courageously defended his beliefs**, even at great personal cost.



One of the Saint's Miracles:

While in a monastery attending the Liturgy in simple monk's clothing, the priest was shocked to find that there was **no bread on the altar after the Creed**. Believing this absence was due to his sins, the priest wept. At that moment, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, presenting Pope Severus and stating, "It is not right to celebrate the Liturgy while the Pope is present." The priest then went to get the Pope and brought him back to the altar, whereupon he discovered the bread had reappeared.



The Fruits of His Steadfastness in Adhering to Correct Teachings:

He left behind many writings and teachings addressing various aspects of the Christian faith, including the nature of God, Christ's relationship to the Church, and the holy sacraments. He also **translated many Greek and Syriac** texts into Coptic, which significantly contributed to the spread of religious knowledge among Christians.

Following the Example of Saint Severus:

Saint Severus of Antioch is not just a historical figure; he serves as a role model for us all. In a time of change and challenges, we should strive to embody his steadfastness in our faith and defend the truth. **Defending the truth requires not only knowledge but also courage and unwavering faith.** We must be active in serving the Church and our communities.

Let us keep our faith pure and defend it with all our strength. We should study the teachings of the Church to gain a thorough understanding of Christian doctrine.

Let us be role models for others in both faith and life, working to spread love and peace.



Our Coptic Orthodox Church honors Saint Severus:

Saint Severus, Pope of Antioch, died in Egypt in 538 AD and was buried in a monastery known as the **Monastery of Glass**, located west of Alexandria.

He is **commemorated in the Divine Liturgy** immediately after Saint Mark and before Pope Dioscorus and Pope Athanasius. This placement reflects his steadfastness in upholding the faith of the Fathers. He preserved this faith and rejected all heresies, despite enduring significant suffering, persecution, and the challenges of exile. Ultimately, he chose to be a simple monk, defending the Orthodox faith globally, rather than occupying the patriarchal throne without maintaining that faith.

The Church celebrates **three feasts in his honor**: the 2nd of Paope, which marks his arrival in Egypt; the 14th of Meshir, commemorating his departure; and the 10th of Koiahk, celebrating his burial in the Monastery of Glass. His remains are currently housed in the Monastery of Saint Mina in Mariut.

Let us emulate his steadfastness in faith and doctrine during these times of change and challenge. Through the blessings of his prayers, may our Lord protect the Church and all of us.





The Man or The Machine (AI)

In light of the tremendous and rapid progress in various fields, let us explore artificial intelligence (AI): What is it, and what does the Bible say about it?

First: The Bible and Inventions

- It is said of God that, “His understanding is infinite” (Psalm 147:5).
- “All things were made through Him, and without Him, nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3).
- “In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3).

Additionally, it is stated:

- “The Most High has given this knowledge to men, so that He may be honored in His wonders” (Sirach 38:6).
- “Every prudent person acts with knowledge, but a fool lays open his folly” (Proverbs 13:16).
- “Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding, for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold” (Proverbs 3:13-14).
- “And I have called by name Bezalel... And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works” (Exodus 31:2-4).

Because God is the Creator of man and the human mind, and the **Giver of knowledge**, wisdom, and scientific insight, an enlightened mind is what drives inventions and builds advanced technologies that benefit humanity.



Second: Who Discovered Artificial Intelligence and When?

The journey of artificial intelligence began in 1950 when British mathematician Alan Turing published a research paper titled “Computing Machinery and Intelligence.” In this paper, he proposed a new concept for testing machine intelligence, addressing the question: **“Can a computer speak like a human?”** This field developed over several decades through the collective efforts of many scientists and engineers.

Third: What is Artificial Intelligence (AI), and How is it Different from Human Intelligence?

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to machines that **can think like humans**, although within the limits of their programming and without the emotions or feelings that we possess. AI can recognize images and generate articles, poems, and predictions based on the data provided to it, mimicking certain aspects of human intelligence.

Human intelligence encompasses mental abilities related to learning, thinking, and understanding. It involves the capacity to absorb ideas, study, analyze, plan, solve problems, and communicate effectively through language.

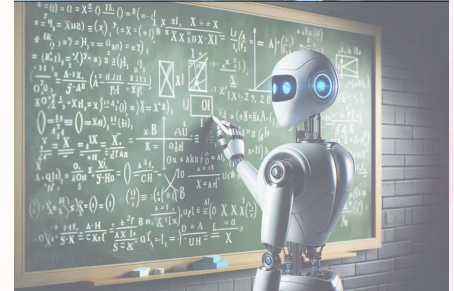
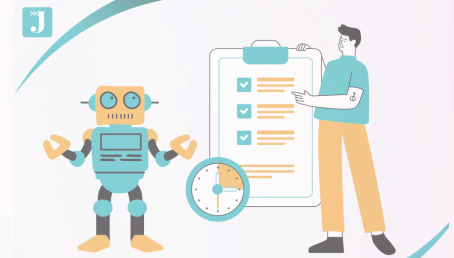
Modern companies, institutions, and organizations are increasingly interested in **gathering large amounts of data** from diverse sources, such as smart sensors, monitoring tools, system logs, and human-generated content. AI technologies analyze these data inputs to effectively assist in business processes, enhance customer support conversations, create original images and text for marketing, and provide intelligent suggestions for analysis.





Advantages of Artificial Intelligence

1. **Improving Production Efficiency:** AI can enhance accuracy and speed in various fields, including:
 - a. **Manufacturing:** Streamlining manufacturing processes.
 - b. **Healthcare:** Improving medical diagnoses and developing new treatments.
 - c. **Marketing:** Achieving sales quickly and with minimal effort through diverse communication methods.
2. **Saving Time and Effort for Humans:** AI can perform tasks more quickly, requiring less human effort. It can assist with preparing reports or analyzing data, thus aiding in household tasks.
3. **Improving Security and Protection:** In fields like cybersecurity, AI can protect computer data, networks, software applications, and critical systems from potential digital threats, enabling the detection of security risks.
4. **Fostering Innovation:** AI can provide new insights and innovative solutions to problems, as well as help invent and develop new products.
5. **Enhancing Quality of Life:** In healthcare and education, AI can develop new teaching methods for children and create new entertainment tools.





Artificial Intelligence: Benefits and Drawbacks

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a powerful technology with the potential to **significantly impact human life** across various areas. As AI continues to evolve, its importance and influence will grow, leading to a bright and promising future in aspects such as **education, the economy, transportation, healthcare, and data security**. However, with its advantages, AI also presents certain disadvantages.

The Legacy of Alfred Nobel

The idea of the Nobel Prize was conceived by the Swedish scientist Alfred Nobel, who invented dynamite in 1867 for use in mining. Toward the end of his life, he realized that dynamite was being used in warfare and destruction, which deeply saddened him. Before his death, he bequeathed his entire fortune to a Swedish bank, the profits of which were to be awarded annually to innovators in various fields such as science, peace, and the arts.

The Dual Nature of Inventions

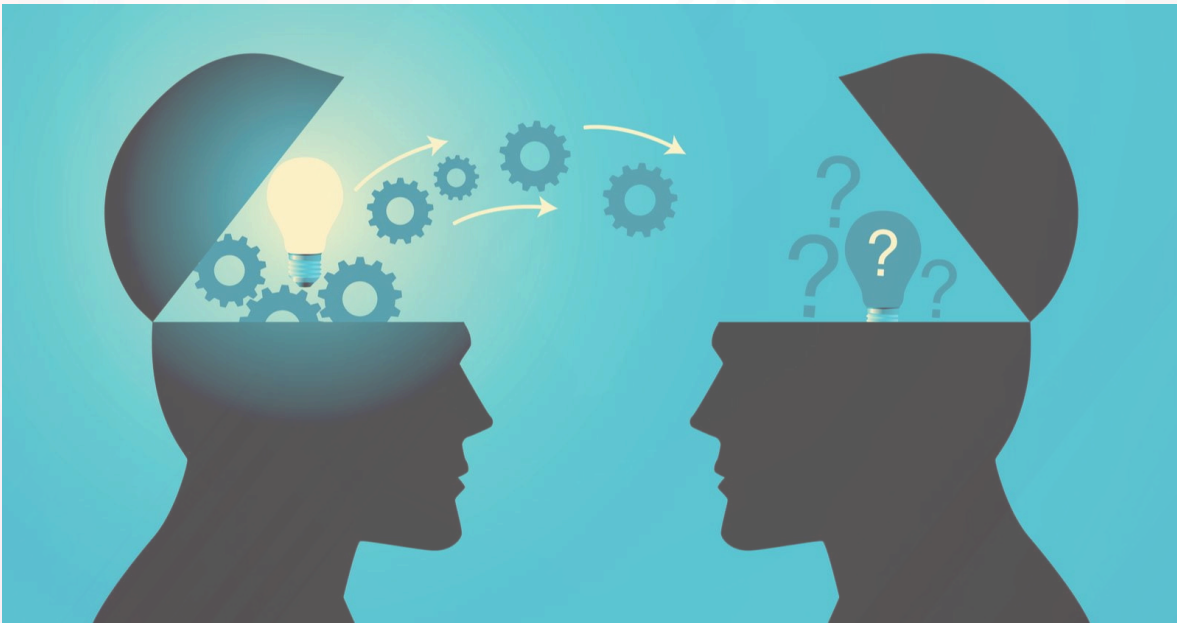
Just as a single medication can be both beneficial and harmful depending on its purpose and dosage, the same is true for artificial intelligence. Thus, **an invention can serve both beneficial and harmful purposes**, depending on whether it is used for good or ill. Inventions must be for the good of humanity and for the advancement of society, in line with biblical teachings: *"Do they not go astray who devise evil? But mercy and truth belong to those who devise good."* (Proverbs 14:22) The Bible also warns us, *"Pay close attention to yourself before a harmful man, for he fabricates evils. Otherwise, he may lead you with incessant whispered reproach"* (Sirach 11:35).



The Importance of Knowledge

The following points highlight the significance of inventions and scientific discoveries:

1. They serve as **a shining candle** and a beacon that guides humanity from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge.
2. Knowledge acts as a lamp **illuminating the paths of life**, helping humanity escape the fortresses of ignorance and darkness.
3. Knowledge is the **foundation of the progress and prosperity** of nations and is essential for addressing the problems facing humanity.

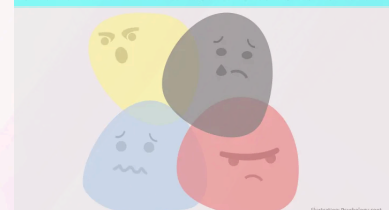




Disadvantages of Artificial Intelligence

While AI offers numerous advantages, it also has its drawbacks:

1. **Increased Unemployment:** Institutions are increasingly relying on devices with massive operational capabilities rather than on human employees, with robots taking over many jobs.
2. **High Costs:** Creating AI devices involves complex operations that require expensive, modern software and hardware.
3. **Limited Creativity:** AI, despite its analytical and predictive capabilities, operates within specific parameters, which hampers its creative potential compared to humans.
4. **Inaccuracy:** AI algorithms may struggle to learn effectively if they receive repetitive data, leading to unexpected and inaccurate results, which can cause losses.
5. **Security and Privacy Risks:** The reliance on data can lead to unauthorized access or misuse, including the dissemination of false information and manipulation of public opinion.
6. **Increased Laziness:** Many individuals have become overly dependent on AI, even for simple tasks such as calculations or remembering numbers and addresses.
7. **Ignoring Emotions:** AI cannot understand and evaluate emotions when making decisions, making it challenging in areas such as marketing and sales, which often require emotional intelligence.
8. **Misleading Education:** AI can provide information from unreliable sources, potentially compromising the quality of education and diverging from the teachings of the Coptic Orthodox Church, which has remained consistent through the ages. We must be vigilant about this.





Memorization

Arise O You Children Of The Light

Arise, O you children of the light, to praise the Lord of Hosts, that He may grant us the salvation of our souls. When we stand in the flesh before You, take away from our minds the sleep of forgetfulness. Grant us alertness, O Lord, in order that we may understand how to stand up before You at the time of prayer, and send up to You the appropriate doxology, and win the forgiveness of our many sins.

Glory to You, the Lover of mankind.

Behold, bless the Lord, O you the servants of the Lord, who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God. In the nights lift up your hands O you saints, and bless the Lord. The Lord shall bless you out of Zion, He who made heaven and earth. ALLELUIA.

Glory to You, the Lover of mankind.

Let my supplication come near before You; O Lord give me understanding according to Your word. Let my petition come before You; revive me according to Your word.

Let my lips flow with praise, when You have taught me Your ordinances. Let my tongue speak of Your words; for all Your commandments are righteous. Let Your hand be for saving me; for I have desired Your commandments. I have longed for Your salvation, O Lord; and Your law is my meditation. My soul shall live and praise You; and Your judgments shall help me. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I have not forgotten Your commandments.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Now and ever and unto the ages of the ages. Amen.

Glory to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit from now and unto the ages of all ages. Amen.



Glory be to You O the Good One and Lover of Mankind. Hail to Your mother the Virgin and to all Your saints. Glory be to You, O Holy Trinity; have mercy upon us. Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered; and let all who hate His holy name flee before His face. But let Your people be in blessing, thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousands, doing Your will. O Lord, You shall open my lips; and my mouth shall declare Your praise. Amen. ALLELUIA.

Psalm 118 Part 2

How shall a young man straighten his way? By keeping Your words. With my whole heart I have sought You: do not cast me away from Your commandments. I have hidden Your words in my heart, that I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O Lord: teach me Your ordinances. With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth. I have delighted in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all richness. I shall speak of Your commandments, and consider Your ways. I will meditate on Your ordinances, and I shall not forget Your words.

Glory to You, the Lover of mankind.



The Gospel of the First Watch of the Midnight Prayer

THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW (CH. 25:1-13)

Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; arise and go out to meet him." Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are going out." But the wise answered, saying, "No; lest there should not be enough for us and you: but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves." And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterward, the other virgins came also, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But he answered and said, "Verily I say unto you, I do not know you." Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Glory be to God forever. Amen.



Litanies of the First Watch of the Midnight Prayer

1. Behold, the Bridegroom is coming at midnight, blessed is the servant whom He finds watching. But he whom He finds sleeping is unworthy of going with Him. Therefore, take heed, O my soul, that you may not fall into deep sleep, and then be cast out of the Kingdom. But watch and cry out saying “Holy, Holy, Holy are You, O God; for the sake of the Theotokos, have mercy on us.”

Δοξα Πατρι κε Υιω κε Αγιω Πνευματι

2. O my soul, be mindful of that awesome day, and wake up and light your lamp with the oil of joy, for you do not know when the voice will call upon you saying: “Behold, the Bridegroom is coming.” So, take heed, my soul, not to fall asleep, lest you stand outside knocking like the five foolish virgins. But watch, entreating that you may meet Christ the Lord with rich oil, and He may grant you the wedding of His true and heavenly glory.

Κε πυν κε αι κε ις τοις εωπας των εωπων. Αλληλ.

3. You are the rampart of our salvation, O Theotokos the Virgin, the mighty and impregnable fortress. Abolish the counsel of the adversaries, and transform the sorrow of your servants into joy. Fortify our city, defend our governors, and intercede for the peace of the world; for you are our hope, O Theotokos.

Κε πυν κε αι κε ις τοις εωπας των εωπων. Αλληλ.



4. O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who is present in all places and fills all, the treasury of good things and the Life-Giver, graciously come, and dwell in us and purify us from all defilement, O Good One, and save our souls.

ΔΟΞΑ ΠΑΤΡΙ ΚΕ ΥΙΩ ΚΕ ΑΓΙΩ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ

5. Just as You were with Your disciples, O Savior, and gave them peace, graciously come also and be with us, and grant us Your peace, and save us, and deliver our souls.

Κε ηγη κε αἰ κε ις τοys εὐηας των εὐωνων. αλλη.

6. Whenever we stand in Your holy sanctuary, we are considered standing in heaven. O Theotokos, you are the gate of heaven, open for us the gate of mercy.