



## Mahragan El Keraza 2023

.....So that you surely

# Rejoice!

**English  
Edition**

**Grades 7-8**



"Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice."

**Deuteronomy 16:15**

*Rejoice!*

*Deuteronomy 16:15*



**H.H. Pope Tawadros II**

Pope of Alexandria &  
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.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

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# Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15



## Introduction

Dear Middle School Children:

Many times, especially now with globalization, we find ourselves needing to search for joy among all the hardship around us. We may even find ourselves being filled with constant sorrow, worry, and fear. As a result, we have decided that the theme for this year's Mahragan will be:



### ***“So that you surely REJOICE”***

- ✦ The word “joy” in Greek is Chara (Χαρά) – The word “Chara” is related to Charis (χάρις) which means blessing. Joy is a blessing and gift from the Holy Spirit; the fruit of the Holy Spirit is ***“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”*** (Galatians 5:22-23).
- ✦ We are also instructed to be joyful. Our teacher St. Paul instructs us in his epistle to the Philippians, ***“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!”*** (Philippians 4:4).

We lose our joy when we try to find it in the world rather than base our joy in the Spirit. The joy of the world is temporary and transient.

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✦ Our Lord Jesus Christ notes to us, ***“Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again” (John 4:13).*** This is to tell us that the things of the world, like worldly joy, are temporary and we will never be satiated by them.

However, real joy is spiritual joy that flows from the depth of the heart, when we base our joy in the Lord, He tells us that ***“you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).***

The Joy of the Lord lives in our hearts  
of the word “JOY” represent:

✦ **(J) Jesus:** I am joyful in my with GOD, I speak to Him and listen to Him through reading my Bible. His word provides with spiritual meals that fulfill me and remind me to be joyful and rejoice in my salvation.

✦ **(O) Others:** I gain spiritual joy through my church by praising with the heavenly angels and the saints as well as other believers.

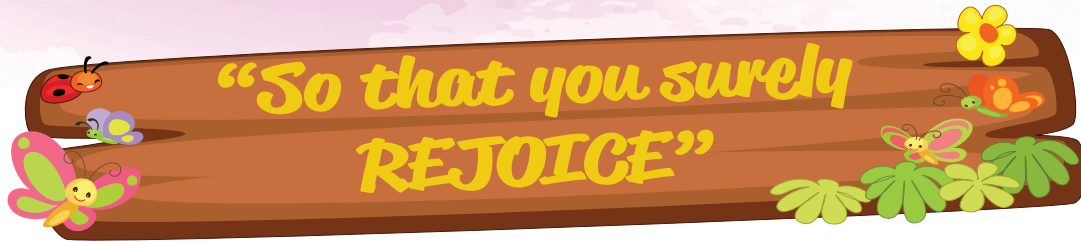
✦ **(Y) Yourself:** I rejoice within myself and accept myself (without pride) because God has graced me with Godly gifts and talents.



By finding the joy in the above letters we will know the fulfillment of joy in Jesus Christ who brings us joy through our life with Him while we are here on earth and extends this joy when we reach our place with Him in heaven.

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Deuteronomy 16:15



The theme of Mahragan 2023 was chosen by the Central Committee of the Mahragan. It is notable that this is the 20-year anniversary of the Mahragan since it was established by H.H. Pope Shenouda III. We thank God for His grace in allowing it to continue through the continued sponsorship and encouragement of H.H. Pope Tawadros II.

The Bible invites us to live a joyful life. Christ tells us that He provides us with His words to follow so “that your joy may be full” (John 15:11). But can we find joy when we do not know true happiness?

- ✦ We may find ourselves happy for one day and depressed for many!
- ✦ We even feel unsatisfied despite achieving many successes in our lives!
- ✦ A common concern for us is how we can find joy when the world seems full of distresses, temptations, ordeals, diseases, wars, and expenses, without any predictability as to how these issues will turn out.

In addressing these issues, Joshua, son of Sirach advises: “**My sons, consider the nations of men, and know that not one of them hoped in the Lord and was confounded**” (The Book of Sirach 2:11).

Trusting in the Lord is a requirement, do this “And your joy will be complete,” (John 15:11) because joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit who works in us.

**There are two types of joy:**

**1. Worldly Joy:** fake, transient, and partial.

a. The person who does not walk and live with Christ finds temporary happiness in fleeting things.

b. Worldly happiness begins and ends when a good thing occurs, it does not last.

c. This happiness affects a person's thoughts or body but does not reach one's spirit.

**2- True Christian joy:** given by Our Lord Jesus Christ "[F]or He Himself is our peace" (Ephesians 2:14) and our source of joy.

a. Our teacher St. Paul again instructs us to "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4).

**b. Jesus Christ is the fountain of joy,** He assures us that "[He] will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you" (John 16:22).

**c. Therefore, our joy is eternal** as Jesus Christ is eternal, fixed as we are fixed in Him, continuous as long as we live with Him.

**d. This joy is gained by hearing the message of salvation** through His word. Feeling His true joy engulfs one's entire being; it saturates the spirit. One will find that the mind feels lighter, the soul rejoices, the body strengthens, and one's relationships succeed!

**e. It is the joy promised to us by Our Lord Jesus Christ,** Who, for our salvation, was incarnated, sacrificed, died, rose, and ascended to the heavens to prepare a place for us to live in companionship with Him and the other saints in glory forever. Blessed are those who keep God within themselves and acquire true joy with Him.

**f. Joy has called people away from idolatry** and towards Christianity from the start of the early church. Once beginning a life with Christ, the Egyptians were in a state of true joy always keeping a smile on their faces.



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Those not living a life with Christ see the joy in a believer's face and are perplexed! What is the source of this great peace and happiness? Truly, joy has become a hallmark of Christianity.

## First: Sources of Christian Joy



### 1- Joy of repentance and our relationship with God:

What do we get from sin other than pain and unhappiness? It has a very real psychological effect. When one sins the feeling of guilt builds, and one begins to feel the Holy Spirit inside of us guiding us to repentance!

Repentance is:

A) Feeling remorse: regretting the sin

B) Feeling the need to repent, stop the sin and understand why it is bad

C) Confessing: like the Prodigal Son, we return to the home of our Heavenly Father (the church) and ask for forgiveness.

D) Seeking spiritual guidance: While confessing and speaking to our father of confession we receive absolution and ask for advice to guide us in our path with Christ. H.H. Pope Shenouda III teaches us that: we are absolved through God's mercy and forgiveness, and we are guided by the Holy Spirit to find our weakness and repent through spiritual training, daily readings, and building our relationship with God.



We can build our relationship with The Lord by praying:

✦ Psalms in the Agpeya.

✦ Arrow prayers such as "Oh my Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me, oh my Lord Jesus Christ help me, I praise you my Lord Jesus Christ"

✦ Private prayers requesting mercy, help, and forgiveness

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- ✦ Written prayers that our saints prayed
- ✦ Praise and hymns - each written for special times throughout the year

## 2- Joy of the koinonia, service, and giving:

### vice, and giving:

One of the most important facets of our spiritual life is Koinonia (κοινωνία in Greek) which means fellowship: people are social by nature; we find joy in companionship centered around giving and love! In Christ's words "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). It's our job to rejoice with the Lord and rejoice together with others in Him. We do this by giving love and loving others just as God loved us. God's love is a pure, generous, and humble love!

Therefore, you should live by the koinonia of love, prayer, and service with your family, friends, neighbors, and community!

The Bible tells us also that those who give receive many blessings themselves:

1. "The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself" (Proverbs 11:25).
2. "Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom" (Luke 6:38).
3. "The blessing of the LORD, it makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it" (Proverbs 10:22).

## 3-Joy of endurance:

The believer doesn't just rejoice through the good but also through challenges. The Bible tells us of the Apostles: "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41).



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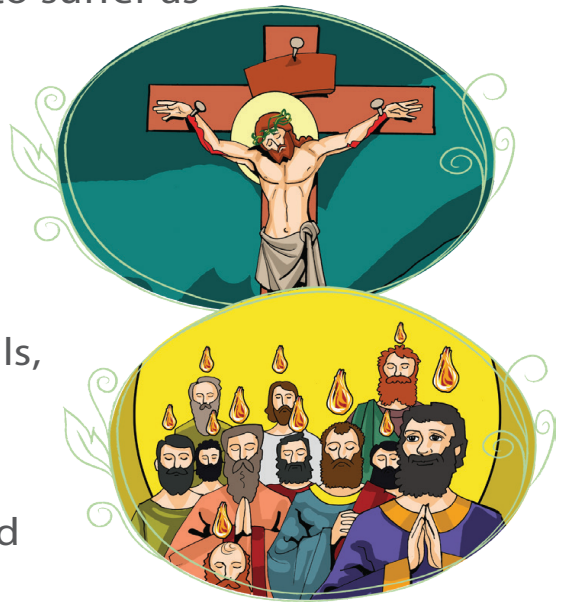
Notice:

- ✦ The Apostles departed rejoicing. The apostles not only endured the tribulations brought to them in patience and thanksgiving but beyond this, they left "Rejoicing in hope" (Romans 12:12).
- ✦ Were counted worthy to suffer shame: Their suffering was psychological as well as physical. Psychological pain, which can be worse than physical pain, still brought about great joy in the Apostles as they were counted worthy to suffer as our Lord Jesus Christ did.

Through their hardships, the Apostles remembered our Lord Jesus Christ Who was crucified for us and suffered for our salvation. Christ's great sacrifice for us required that He experience every type of pain:

- ✦ Physical pains while on the cross, our Lord Jesus Christ felt the pain of the nails, the crown of thorns, and the wound in His side by a harpoon - all after being subjected to painful lashes!
- ✦ Psychological pain: Christ was shamed by the Romans when they spat on Him, insulted Him, and mocked Him! He was also betrayed by His own disciple!
- ✦ Spiritual pain: Christ experienced spiritual pain when He, who was without spot or blemish, took on our sins. The Bible describes this great act, referring to Christ "who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

Our Lord endured all of this for our sake "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).



## **Second: Why Do we rejoice?**

**1) We rejoice because of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has redeemed and saved us:**

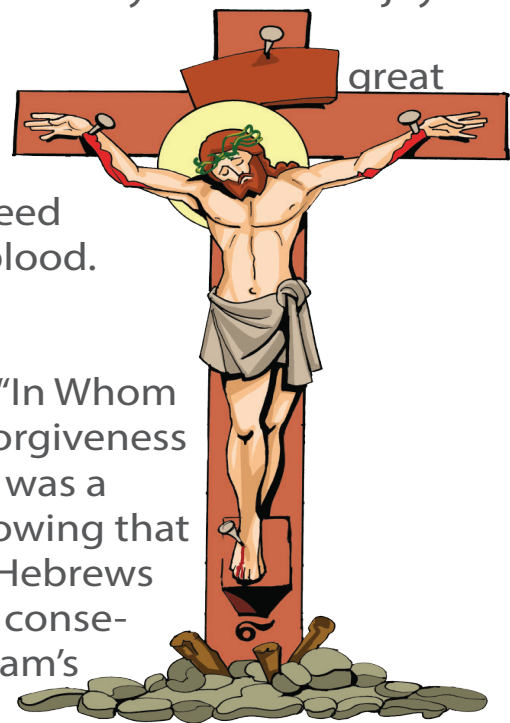
### **A. "Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous" (Psalm 97:12).**

i. We should rejoice because of God's amazing love for us.

ii. He created us in His image and wants us to live with Him in eternal paradise. Our Lord Jesus Christ loves us so much that although we disobeyed Him, He incarnated, lived in poverty and rejection, and then suffered and died on the cross.

iii. All of this He did, so He could be buried, resurrect, and ascend into the Heavens to sit on His throne and prepare a place for us! All of this is done so that "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness" (Isaiah 35:10).

iv. This is the cause of rejoicing! This mercy that He has granted us calls us to rejoice with our Savior Who opened to us the path of eternity through His Holy Cross and freed us from the shackles of sin with His precious blood.



### **B- The Blood of Jesus Christ:**

a) Forgives our sins: Christ is our Savior, "In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7) & Colossians 1:14); this was a necessary suffering He took upon Himself, knowing that "without shedding of blood is no remission," (Hebrews 9:22). This forgiveness of sin heals us from the consequences of the actions of the past (such as Adam's original sin).

b) Purifies us from the corruption of sin: the Holy Bible tells us that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). This purification heals us from present actions, such as the sins of the day and the lasting impacts of sin.

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- c) Sanctifies us for the Lord: The Holy Bible tells us more about the effect of Christ's sacrifice, stating "Therefore, Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate" (Hebrews 13:12). This sanctification results in our consecration for Him (with baptism and Myron/chrisem).
- d) Establishes us in the Lord: Christ told us that "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56).
- e) Raises us in eternal life: Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54).

**C- How do we not rejoice!** Where the punishment for sin is death and He took it upon His shoulders for us to dwell with Him eternally, how could one not be filled with joy?!

## **2) We Rejoice Because We Have the Holy Bible that Guides us in Life**

A- "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11).

i. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us the Holy Bible, it has commandments and teachings, exhortations, and comforting sayings. We rejoice in that God loved us so much He gave us the instructions to reach eternal life with Him.

ii. Learning God's word will lead us to the Paradise of Joy. The Bible tells us to "search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).

iii. Through His word, we find life! God tells just how precious His word is stating that, "the words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

iv. David praised those who meditate on the Lord's law day and



night (Psalm 1:2). And the Prophet Jeremiah tells God, "Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16).

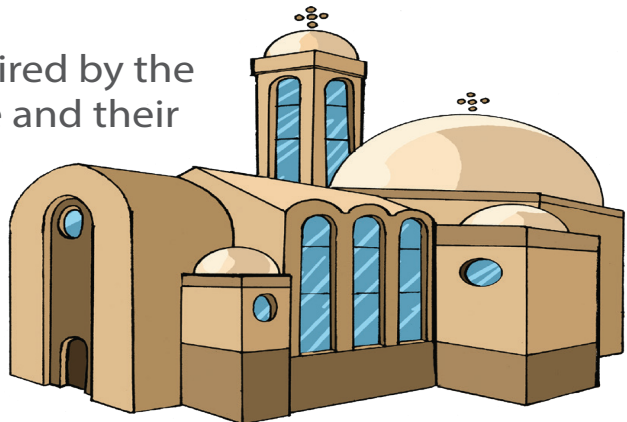
B- The Holy Bible is deep and endless, its meanings and messages are infinite just as God is infinite.

C- His word is the source of our beliefs, doctrines, and rituals.

i. Our beliefs come directly from the Bible and our understanding of His holy word comes from the guidance of the church fathers, the laws set during ecumenical councils, and from Orthodox Church traditions.

ii. St. Augustine once said that "I accept the Holy Bible, received from the church, explained by fathers, and lived by saints."

D- The Great Church fathers were inspired by the Bible in all their works, their way of life and their asceticism. St. Anthony said, "the Holy Bible is enough for our learning" and so "if I wanted to read, I read in the Bible," and it was said about St. Pachomius that his teachings were simply a "summary of the Bible."



E-Yes, they loved the Bible, lived with it, read it regularly until they memorized it, and therefore, their lives were blessed and sanctified.

### **3) We Rejoice Because We Have our Home, The Church**

A- Our Coptic Orthodox Church was purchased by God with His blood. Her teachings were received from the apostles. Thus, we are called an apostolic church, established, unchanged in our teachings and faithful to God (despite persecutions or heresies).

B- Our Church is a home of Joy.

a) We rejoice in being a member of the Body of Jesus Christ

How do we become a member of the Body of Christ? And What does it

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mean to be a part of His Holy Body?

1- I gain membership through the sacraments: We become members of His Holy Body by taking part in the sacraments of the Church.

a. Through Baptism we are renewed. And through the Chrismation of the Holy Myron, we are consecrated.

b. Taking part in Holy Communion unites us with God and establishes us in Him by partaking in His Holy Body and Blood.

c. No matter my sin, I turn to repentance and confession for the remission and forgiveness of my sins to keep my relationship with God strong.

d. In sickness I look to God for healing and am anointed with the Holy Oil prayed over by the priest during the Unction of the Sick.

e. Christ blesses us with the sacrament of marriage allowing man and woman to unite in purity and become one in Christ's Body (the church) "and the two shall become one flesh;" so, then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark 10:8—9).

2- I protect it through spiritual struggle: We protect this blessed mem-

bership in Christ through our spiritual struggle. This membership was granted to us as a gift from God who loved us and sacrificed Himself for us. To stay in Christ, united with Him, and to walk with Him, we must repent, struggle against sin, be filled by God through prayer, reading His word, and partaking in the

sacraments throughout our time on earth so that we may rejoice with His grace.

3- I express it by service in the church: Becoming part of His Holy Body means taking care of the other parts of the body, people. We do this by



serving others and the church. Our service is a testimony of our role as a member of Christ's body. It gives us a mission and an identity: A Coptic Orthodox Christian and a member of the Holy body of Christ. Everyone has a role and way to serve God. The Church guides us to our role and service to which Christ calls by preparing us through pre-servants classes and the advice of our servants.

4- I testify to the Joy of being one in Christ among society: We live among the world, but it is important that we do not become OF the world. Instead, we must testify to the world of our Joy in Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ instructs us in this, stating, "You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world," (Matthew 5:13—14), "A little leaven leavens the whole lump," (Galatians 5:9), We are even categorized as "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

#### **4) We Rejoice in our Spiritual Fulfillment**

"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips" (Psalms 63:5). The Orthodox Christian – being a member in Christ's Body – lives his or her life in joy and satisfaction through:

**1) Praying the Psalms:** We rejoice in hearing the prayers of our Christian fathers/heroes, making our own requests on behalf of ourselves, preaching peace to our own heart/soul, uniting with our fellow believers for praise and worship, and expressing all of the different emotions – both positive and negative – that we experience in our lives.

**2) Our Supplications:** We beseech God for His help and mercy as St. Anthony taught his disciples to pray saying, "my Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me" or "my Lord Jesus Christ help me."

**3) The Daily readings:** The Katamaras contain specific passages for each day of the year and are read during the liturgy and Church services.



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4) **The Synaxarium:** Allows us to remember the daily commemorations of the saints, the church's councils and history, and the many miracles God has shown us through the lives of His saints in the past for us to rejoice and learn from them.

**5) The Daily Praises:** Praises are the language of the heavenly hosts, declare great theological truths, and are immortal hymns. In them, we praise Him who loved us, redeemed us, and dwelt with us by His Holy Spirit. We recite them together in the church as it is truly the house of Angels, the home of joy, and the tabernacle of praise. Our praise is not merely the loud chanting or emotional words that are prayed but involves the quiet worship of a heart that is filled with the joy of salvation from her Savior.

**6) The Holy Fasts:** The weekly fasts of Wednesday and Friday, the Nativity fast before Christmas, the Great Lent before the Resurrection, St. Mary's fast, the apostle's fast, and the fast of Nineveh (Jonah's fast).

**7) The Special Church Seasons:** Including the Holy Week of Pascha and special praises during the month of Kiahk.

**8) The Holy Feasts:** Celebrating the seven major and seven minor feasts of the Lord allows us to really live the occasion and focus on the benefits of Our Lord Jesus Christ's life for our lives.

**9) The Holy Communion:** This is the pinnacle of spiritual fulfillment at the conclusion of the daily liturgies.

**10) The Sayings of the Fathers:** We can gain many benefits for our life and service by studying the words of the righteous saints who came before us and lived lives of joy with God. Through all of these, we continuously enjoy our Orthodox faith as we glorify God in Spirit and Truth, love all those who are around us without compromising our beliefs, and pass on the most Holy Faith to future generations as it was delivered to us.



### 5) We Rejoice in Asceticism

There is a huge difference between moderate biblical asceticism and the sort of “heroic asceticism” that seeks to magnify oneself while causing depression. The asceticism we accept is like that of St. Anthony and St. Paul. After being alone in a cave for 20 years, St. Anthony exited with a smiling face while having neither gained nor lost much weight. The asceticism that brings joy is both moderate and spiritually sound since the body is a gift from God that we must take care of.



- ✦ It involves reasonable sacrifices as St. Paul teaches us, “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3).
- ✦ It is a way to express our love for the Lord and is done under the supervision of the father of confession or by the counsel of a spiritual father.
- ✦ Both the method and the goal of this asceticism seeks to glorify the Gospel by keeping Jesus at its center. We offer our sacrifices through Christ to glorify Him. We don’t offer them through our own strength/efforts, nor do we do them to benefit ourselves or obtain some personal gain. Thus, in our Orthodox faith, even when we are fasting or struggling in ascetic works, we remain enlightened and full of joy.

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## 6) We Rejoice in Martyrdom

Our church is the Church of the Martyrs:

a. Our martyrs had the courage to sacrifice their own lives because they always set their eyes on eternal life, heaven, and the Lord Jesus Christ.



b. Martyr-

dom is the highest degree of holiness and the greatest way in which we can imitate the Lord Christ, following Him in our calling as St. Paul says: "Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:7).

c. St. Moses the Strong teaches us saying, "Think about heaven often so that your desire for it is stirred up within you." This quote highlights how the church's fathers approached the life of faith; by focusing their eyes on Christ and setting their minds on the heavenly things.

d. This view helps us to forsake all worldly cares and endure the many difficulties of this life such as disease or death. The life of faith looks towards our Lord Jesus Christ and focuses on the blessings of martyrdom and entering the paradise of joy. This is the accurate view of our life, as Wisdom tells us, "The wicked is banished in his wickedness, but the righteous has a refuge in his death" (Proverbs 14:32).

Martyrdom is not an old-fashioned concept:

e. We recently rejoiced in the departure of the 21 Coptic martyrs of Libya so that, even until today, the martyrs challenge human nature and accept torture and death in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this, they have received great crowns in heaven!

f. The entire world watched them suffer and shed their blood with spiritual strength and with all patience through prayer. Even during the most frightening situations, even in the face of death, martyrdom remains a form of witnessing to God that is full of joy.

### **7) We Rejoice in the Glory of Eternal Life**

Some of the biggest issues that distract us from thinking about eternal life are our preoccupations with earthly concerns. Although we were created in the Image of God and received life from His Breath, we are only on this earth for a limited time. We regard this limited amount of time as a big concern even though we know that we will soon return to our heavenly origin in the Paradise of Joy for eternity with God. Instead of focusing on how much time we have, we ought to focus on the great blessings and joy that is being prepared for us in heaven including:

#### **A- The Joy of Holiness:**

St. John the beloved saw those in heaven as a great army clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands as they praise and sing; "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14). Their white clothes are pure as they have been washed in the Blood of the Lamb while the palms in their hands signify victory since "the last enemy



that will be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26). The glorified body that we will be clothed with in heaven has no limitations and does not commit sin. In heaven, there will be neither disease nor death and there will be no more temptations or sorrow.

## **B- The Joy of Happiness:**

"Enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:21) is the calling our souls will hear when we reach the Paradise of Joy. The joy that we'll feel when meeting the Lord, angels, and saints who have preceded us will be overwhelming. The soul will find its rest and ultimate happiness in the heavenly Jerusalem; the place from which sorrow, sadness, and groaning have fled away in the light of the saints! "That they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them" (Revelation 14:13). "For man goes to his eternal home" (Ecclesiastes 12:5).

## **C- The Joy of Fellowship (Koinonia)**

In heaven, we live in communion with God as St. Paul testifies saying, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). Can you imagine how joyful it will be when we meet with the Lord Himself!? What will it be like to speak directly with the angels and archangels, the mother of God - St. Mary herself, the saintly fathers, apostles, prophets, martyrs, and whole choir of the saints!?

We will no doubt enter the Kingdom of Heaven with endless joy as we stand in the presence of the limitless God! That joy will surely be glorious and indescribable as it is written, "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared



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for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

#### **D- The Joy of Eternity:**

The Lord Jesus Christ assures us saying, "because I live, you will live also" (John 14:19). Therefore, since God lives for eternity, we also, who believe in Him, will live forever as the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us saying, "and this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). For this reason, St. Paul did not consider death to be the end but proclaims, "for to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Thus, we live in the mercies and love of our Lord Jesus Christ in this life while awaiting that kingdom prepared for us in Heaven. Let us then live in continual joy as we remember:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ: He is our Savior and beloved Redeemer.
2. The Holy Bible and Word of God; these are "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalms 119:105).
3. The Body of Christ in the Church; the house of angels, prayer, praises, and joy.
4. The Hope of Eternal Life; that great promise that we will live with God forever!

Rejoice!

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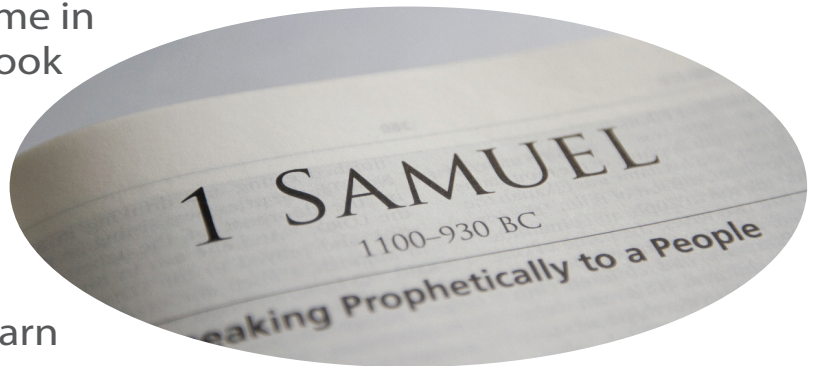


Instructions: Read 1 Samuel 1-15

Let us be joyful in the Lord Jesus through the Old Testament which prophesied His coming for our salvation.

Today is a feast and people are happy here and there, people are going to the tabernacle dressed up in new clothes, kids are playing and having fun. But behold this woman who looks so sad and hasn't stopped weeping and praying since she came in the house of the Lord. Also, look who is there talking to her, it is the priest trying to find out why she is crying and so sad.

Let's see who this woman is and what her story is. Let's learn about the results of her prayers.



## Overview of the Book of Samuel:

1- Both of the two books of Samuel (Samuel 1 and 2) were originally one book in the Hebrew transcript. The books then got divided into two in the translation of the Seventy; at that time writing used to be done on scrolls. This is why the original the book of Samuel got divided into two separate scrolls. This remains the same in the Bibles in use by us today.

2- The word Samuel means "God listened" as God listened to Hannah,

Samuel's mom, and answered her prayers.

3- Samuel wrote the first and second parts of this book before he died, while the two prophets Gad and Nathan completed the rest of the book after Samuel's death.

4- God was the king of the people of Israel, he chose leaders like Moses the prophet, and judges like Gideon, Samson, and Samuel. However, the people of Israel chose to establish a king for themselves like the other nations. Despite this, God didn't depart from his people, but kept taking care of them and fulfilled all their needs.

5- This book is considered the link between the era of judges (Eli the priest and Samuel the prophet) and the era of kings (with Saul being the first king, followed by King David).

6- One of the most important virtues that is a focus of this book is that of prayer. This book also shows us, on multiple occasions, the sanctuary, its holiness, and the dignity of the house of God. We learn in the Book of Samuel how people used to go to the house of God and what they used to do there.

7- This book also highlights the harsh punishment of anybody who didn't respect or appreciate the house of the Lord during that era.

8- The book is divided into three main parts:

A. Samuel the prophet (chapters 1-7)

B. Saul the king (chapters 7-15)

C. David the prophet and the king (chapters 17-31)

Rejoice!

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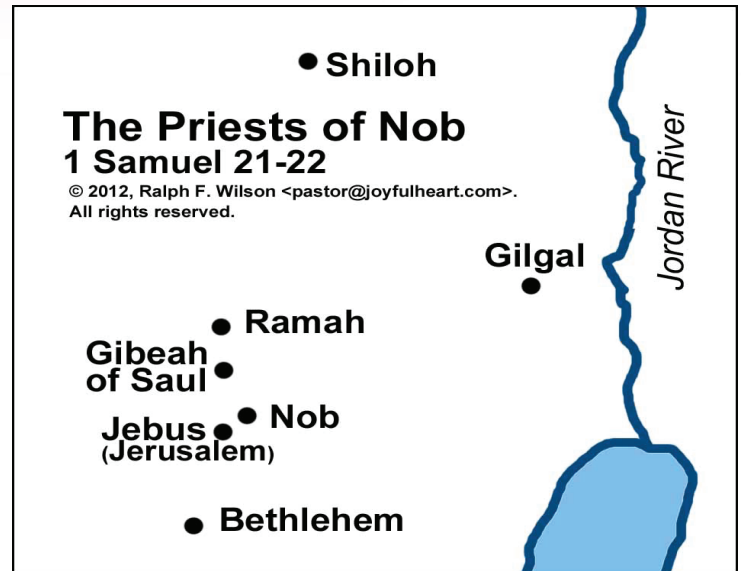
### Important places in this book:

**1) Rammah:** Where Samuel was born

**2) Shiloh:** The place where the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant dwell

**3) Mizpah:** The place where Samuel had a meeting with the people, they all prayed and wept so God may have mercy upon them and help them with the war, Philistines tried to attack them, but God defended them.

**4) Gilgal:** The place where Saul got crowned to be a king



## Chapter 1

### 1. Elkanah was a

righteous man who worshipped God with all his heart, he was from the tribe of Levi who dwelt in the

mountain of Ephraim, hence he was called Ephraimite. He had two wives, Hannah which means Grace and Peninnah which means Pearl (the Old Testament allowed polygamy, this was prohibited in the New Testament).

2- Elkanah loved his wife Hannah more and used to give her twice as much as he gave Peninnah; this is probably why Peninnah used to dislike and envy Hannah. Peninnah made Hannah feel bad because Peninnah had kids, but Hannah was initially barren.

3- It was a dishonor for any woman to be barren, because every woman wished that the Lord Jesus Christ could possibly come through her descendants. So, people in the Old Testament thought of women

who did not bare children as suffering God`s wrath and lacking in blessing.

**4- Hannah was a righteous woman** who prayed tearfully in the tabernacle before God to relieve her pain and sorrow of not having children. Her husband used to take the family to the Tabernacle each year to celebrate the feast.



**5- Eli the priest thought that Hannah was drunk** because the way she was praying in such distress appeared as some people who used to come to the feast and get drunk. In her meekness, she explained to him that she is not drunk (nor a daughter of Belial – which was an insult used to describe anyone practicing evil), rather, she is praying to God with her heart full of sorrow. She longed for the Lord to listen to her supplication and answer her heartfelt request that she might bear children.

**6- Hannah vowed a very unusual vow:** while she was waiting patiently for God to give her a child, she vowed that she would offer the child to the Lord and that child would live life in the house of the Lord.



**7- Finally, God grants Hannah her heartfelt request** and gives her a baby boy who she names Samuel. Once he was a toddler, she

offered him to live in the house of the Lord as she previously vowed. Hannah used to see Samuel once a year when she went to the Tabernacle to celebrate the feast.

## ***What can we learn from this chapter?***

**1- We should not treat people differently** as Elkanah did when he treated Hannah differently than Peninnah who felt jealous of Hannah and felt negative feelings toward her.

**2- We should look to solve our problems through prayer** and supplication.

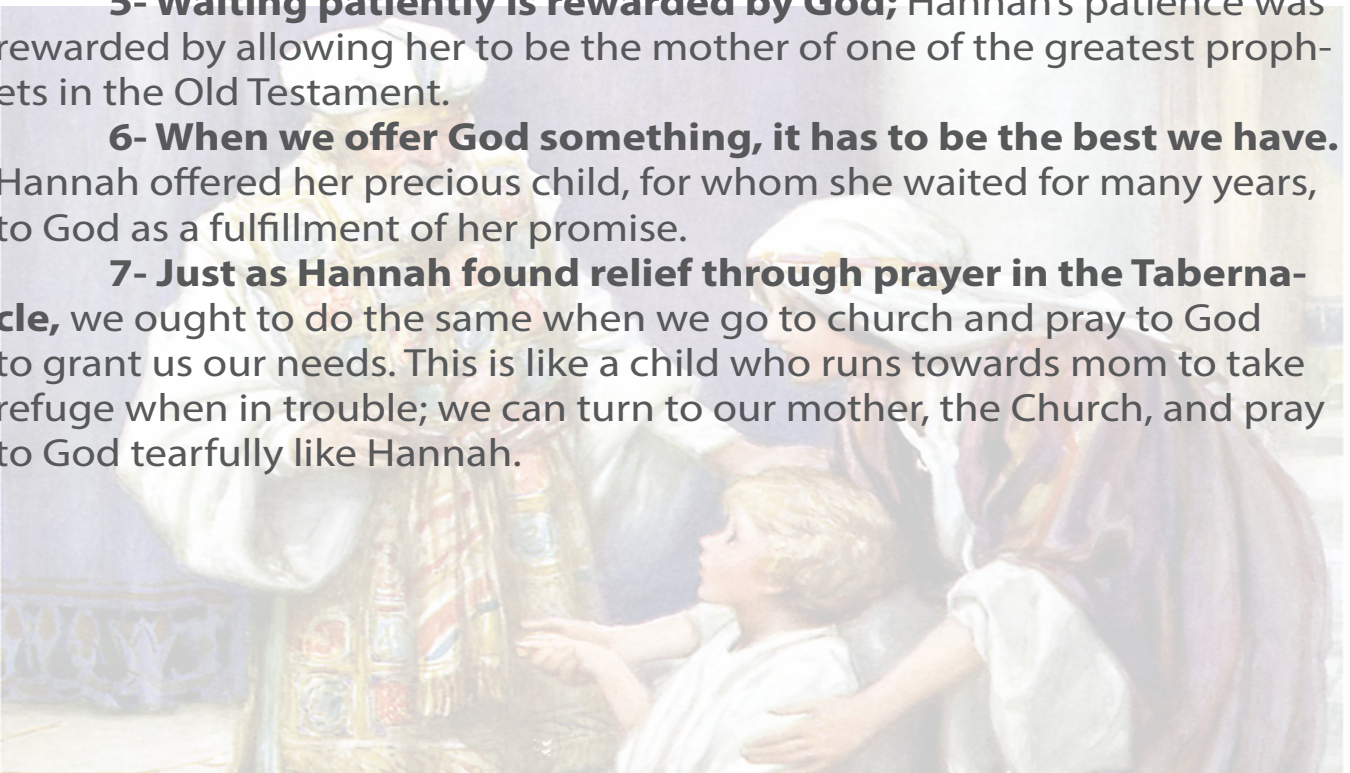
**3- If at any time we want to defend ourselves** and explain a situation, we need to do this with meekness and without getting over-excited, as Hannah did with Eli the priest.

**4- We should not dishonor ourselves** when celebrating a feast by drinking alcohol and getting drunk; our focus should be on the spirituality of the Feast.

**5- Waiting patiently is rewarded by God;** Hannah's patience was rewarded by allowing her to be the mother of one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament.

**6- When we offer God something, it has to be the best we have.** Hannah offered her precious child, for whom she waited for many years, to God as a fulfillment of her promise.

**7- Just as Hannah found relief through prayer in the Tabernacle,** we ought to do the same when we go to church and pray to God to grant us our needs. This is like a child who runs towards mom to take refuge when in trouble; we can turn to our mother, the Church, and pray to God tearfully like Hannah.



### 1- The chil-

#### dren of Eli the priest,

did not respect the house of God and did evil in the tabernacle (the house of God),

so, death was to be their punishment. This is why we have to be extremely careful of what we do in the house of God (the church), because this place is holy and it is the house of God and has its own respect, holiness, and dignity. This is why we should never take God's patience lightly, especially when He extends His mercy upon us if we do something wrong inside his house.

## Chapter 2

### 2- While Samuel

#### was growing up in God's

service and getting filled with grace, the children of Eli the priest on the other hand were doing more and more evil and walking in the path of evil. They were very greedy and did not care about God's sacrifices and used to take much more than what God commanded for the priests of the sacrifices that the people used to offer. They did not wait till the fat was burnt as the decree says and used to commit a lot of sins.

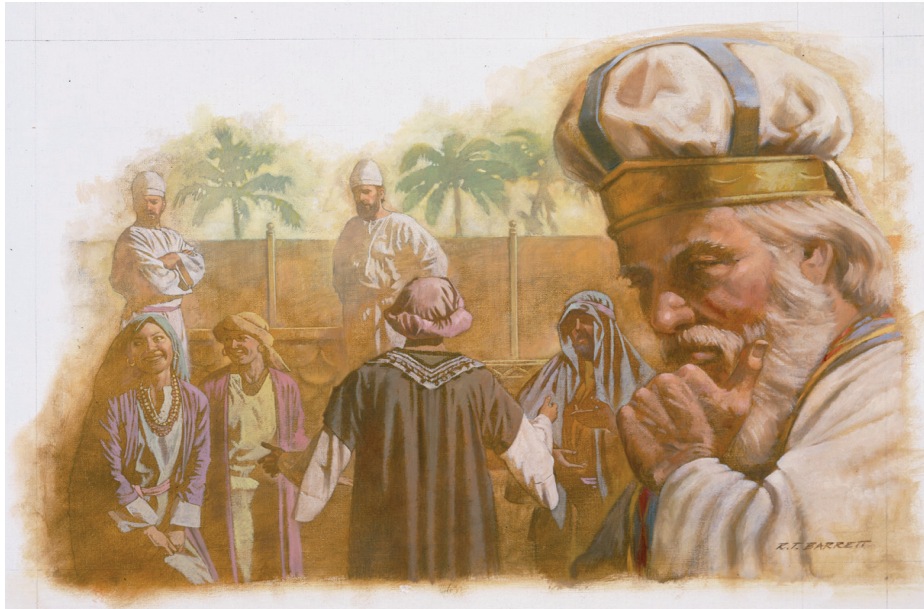


### 3- Hannah offered Samuel to the Lord and the Lord rewarded her

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with another five children, three sons and two daughters.



#### 4- Eli the priest, was not firm enough

with his sons, who continued to do evil. This is why God severely punished him by allowing all of his family members to die while still young, also his two sons Hophni and Phinehas would both die and his household would be extremely poor and in need for

even a piece of dry bread. "But now the Lord saith, 'Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed'" (1 Samuel 2:30).

### ***What do we learn from this chapter?***

**1) We should not forget to thank God** for the things he gives us; Hannah remembered God when she had Samuel. Consider what Hannah did when God answered her prayers. Had she forgotten the Lord in the midst of her excitement as we often do? We often pray to God when we are in trouble but once God answers our prayers, we no longer remember to thank him. Hannah, for example, did not do that, rather, she went back and offered thanks to God with amazing words (read Hannah's prayer 1 Sam 2:1-10). This deeply heartfelt prayer shows how God defends the meek, lifts up the humble and feeds the hungry. Compare this prayer with the prayer of the Theotokos, St. Mary (Luke 1: 44-55).

**2) It is great to get to know God more** and more every day as Samuel did. "Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor

.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

with the Lord and also with man" (1 Samuel 2:26).

**3) Don't be upset when your parents are firm with you** at times; this is their job. Otherwise, they would not be good parents before God like Eli the priest did with his two sons Hophni and Phinehas. He was not firm enough with them, so they walked in the path of unrighteousness.

### 1- People's evil

had become so incredibly strong that

they no longer listened to God's word, therefore, God did not show them many signs or give them much guidance. "Behold, the days come," saith the Lord GOD, "that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD" (Amos 8:11).

2- God wanted to send a message to Eli the priest through

this beloved son and servant Samuel. God called upon but Samuel didn't realize that God was the one calling upon him, especially since there was a famine of prophecy at that time, therefore, Samuel thought that the voice he was hearing was Eli the priest calling upon him. Twice he thought this and went to Eli and the third time Eli the priest realized that

## Chapter 3



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it is probably God calling upon Samuel; "Therefore, Eli said unto Samuel, 'Go, lie down: and it shall be, if He calls you, that you shall say, Speak, LORD; for your servant hears'" (1 Samuel 3:9).

### 3- Samuel did as Eli the priest said,

so, God spoke with him and told him everything He is going to do with Eli the priest; Eli the priest then learned from Samuel what God was going to do to him and said, "He is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes" (1 Samuel 3:18).

### 4- Eli the priest was righteous, but

his biggest problem was that he wasn't firm enough with raising his two sons.

### 5- Samuel was twelve years old

when God called upon him and spoke with him and he was growing up and God was with him.



## ***What should we learn from this chapter?***

- 1) If we live in the house of God like Samuel did, then we will stay away from the evil in the world around us. God will protect us as he did with Samuel who used to live in the house of God serving Him at all times.
- 2) We learn about obedience and serving others. When Samuel thought that Eli the priest was calling him, he got up every time and answered his call even though it was late at night and Samuel was sleeping.
- 3) We should seek advice and accept guidance from those who are older than we are as Samuel did when he listened to what Eli the priest told him.
- 4) Ask yourself: Am I also growing up in the presence of God like Samuel or am I making choice that separates me from God so that I will be apart from Him as I grow?

**1. Israel went out to battle the Philistines** and encamped beside Ebenezer (“rock of helping”)

without any purification of their lives and without seeking God’s advice or guidance; therefore, they were defeated.

## Chapter 4

**2. They went back to take the Ark of the Covenant** from Shiloh

(the place where God dwells), so that they could win the battle. Unfortunately, this was not a sign of repentance and going back to God, rather, they thought among themselves that just physically taking the Ark of the Covenant would help them defeat their enemies. Instead they were defeated again and thirty thousand soldiers fell that day; worse, their enemies captured the Ark of the Covenant.



**3. Hophni and Phinehas**, the two sons of Eli the priest, both died and when Eli the priest learned that their enemies captured the Ark of the Covenant, he fell off his chair, broke his neck, and died right away.

**4. The pregnant wife of Phinehas** **was dying** as she was giving birth to her son, therefore she called the son Ichabod (meaning: “the glory has departed from Israel”). She was greatly saddened by the capture of the Ark of the Covenant and by the death of both her husband and father-in-law.

### ***What do we learn from this chapter?***

**1) True worship should not just be in rituals** and traditions but rather, through heartfelt prayer. If a person participates in rituals but is still maintaining a life of sin, their worship is just pretense and is not actually heartfelt.

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**2) In order to receive God's help we cannot go to church and simultaneously live a life of sin.** I must repent and confess and seek the presence of the Lord in the house of God in order to receive His blessings.

## *Chapter 5*

***1) Dagon (meaning "fish"),*** the god that the Philistines worshipped, had a body of a fish and the head and arms of a human.

***2) The Philistines arrogantly captured the Ark of the Covenant***

and put it in Dagon's temple in Ashdod - they knew that the Ark of the Covenant represents the presence of God. Because of this, God broke their arrogance and the statue of Dagon fell on its face before the Ark of the Covenant. Again, they returned the statue of Dagon to his place, and it fell a second time and its head and arms got cut off. God ravaged the people of Ashdod and struck them with tumors both in Ashdod and its territories. And the rats increased in their lands to eat their crops.



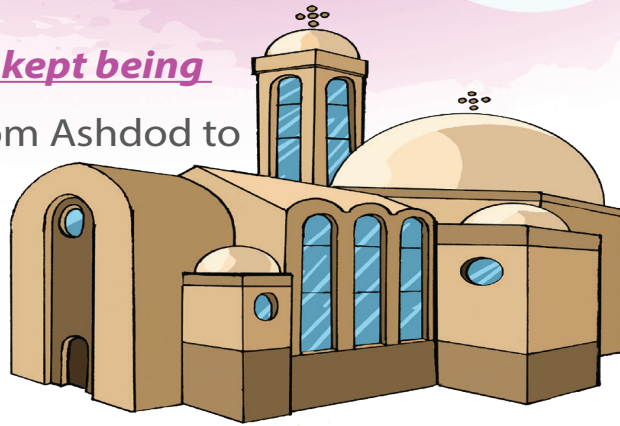
.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

### 3) The Ark of the Covenant kept being carried away by the Philistines from Ashdod to

Gath then to Ekron, but the hand of the Lord was against them and their cities suffered major destruction; as a result, the Philistines decided to return the Ark of the Covenant to Israel. It comes as

no surprise that the Ark of the Covenant could not remain in their midst long with their idols intact.



### ***What do we learn from this chapter?***

Consider whether you also keep something like Dagon in your heart? Dagon could represent a bad habit, the love of money, or being under the control of anything that is inappropriate for you. Dagon could represent songs about unrighteous things, smoking, drug use, alcohol consumption, a specific sin, or misuse of the internet to access inappropriate content that is not suitable in the pursuit of righteousness.

1- The Ark of the Covenant remained with the Philistines for almost seven months.

## Chapter 6

2- God used the priests of idol gods and diviners to witness for Him as He is the only true God. Witnessing to the Lord, the priests and diviners suggested that they shouldn't return the Ark of the Covenant back to Israel empty, rather, they should send some trespass offerings back with it as a confession of their wrongdoing. They made it mandatory for the five Philistine cities to

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contribute to these trespass offerings. These trespass offerings were five golden tumors and five golden rats because it was a habit for these Philistines to make offerings through images representing the sick body parts to the gods in order to seek healing for diseases.

**3- They put the Ark of the Covenant on a newly-made cart** and hitched it to two milk cows that had never been yoked and took their calves away from them and put the golden trespass offerings (the gold) in a chest beside the Ark of the Covenant and let the cows go.

**4- The Philistines were watching where the cows would go** because they weren't sure whether the tumors and destruction in their cities was because of the God of Israel as a punishment for their wrongdoing for capturing the Ark of the Covenant or whether it happened by chance and wasn't from God. They chose two milk cows and held their calves' away from them because they would naturally feel they must return to their calves to feed them and, thus, wouldn't go far from them. If they did not do what was natural, and left their calves to return the Ark of the Covenant, this would be a sign from the God of Israel.

**5- The two untrained cows** went straight to Israel and its territory Beth Shemesh.

**6- The people of Beth Shemesh didn't pay the appropriate respect** to the Ark of the Covenant as a symbol of the presence of God and didn't invite the priests and Levites to appropriately care for it, so God struck the people of Beth Shemesh for they looked in the Ark of the Covenant and on that day fifty thousand and seventy men died.

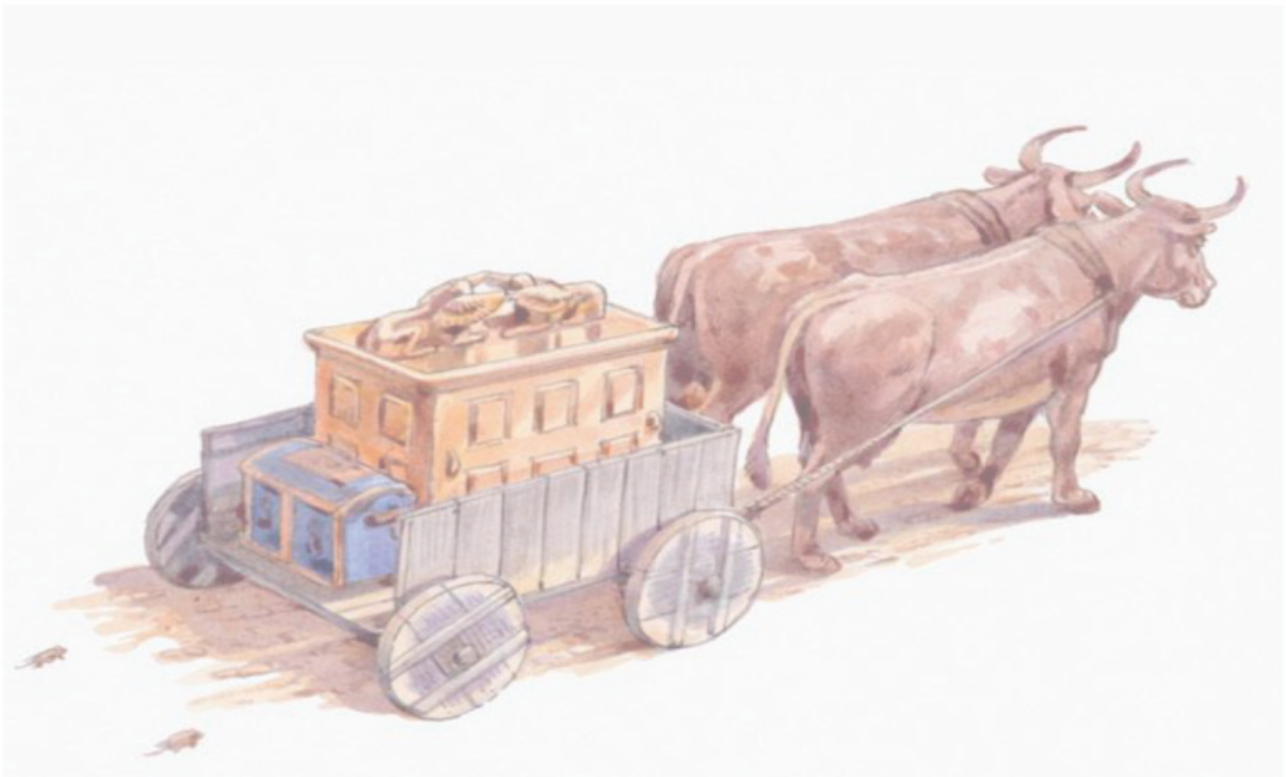
## ***What do we learn from this chapter?***

**1) The Ark of the Covenant** was set on a brand-new cart hitched to two cows that never got to work in a field, the same way the Lord Jesus Christ

entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey that no one ever rode before.

**2) We should offer God a new life** (brand new cart, cows never been yoked before) so we can't claim that we love and worship God but still live in sin (this would be hypocrisy and dualism).

**3) We should always give God glory, dignity, and holiness.** This is why our church glorifies the holy sacraments and we shouldn't partake of the communion with carelessness or without being ready and we should listen to the word of God with full attention and respect.



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## Chapter 7

### 1) Terror spread because of the

Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, not only in the

cities of The Philistines but also in Beth Shemesh. The people of the village of Yaarim realized that it represented God's presence with them. It was a fire devouring the wicked and perverts, but at the same time a blessing and a cause of joy for those who love Him. Therefore, they ascended with joy, respect, and dignity, then sanctified Eleazar to keep the ark of the LORD. The ark stayed with them for 20 years.

2) The Ark of the Covenant returned, and this prompted the prophet Samuel to preach to the people to return to the Lord and remove strange gods from their midst. His advice and guidance produced a good result; they removed the Baals (the plural of Baal) and Ashtoroth (the plural of Ashtoreth), Baal's wife. The people of Israel prayed collectively in one spirit, and they all fasted.

3) The secret of the people's weakness is that they hold on to the formalities of worship without keeping its essence. Their minds were with God, but their hearts were running after other gods.

4) The way to repair the corruption and deviation of the people was prayer. Samuel the prophet gathered them to pray in Mizpeh. The Philistines were happy to fight the children of Israel. "The people said to Samuel, 'Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us'" (1 Sam 7:8).

5) Samuel prayed and brought up this sacrifice to the Lord and He responded; the people of Israel won this time. They conquered the Philistines, forced them to flee, recaptured several cities that had formerly been taken from them, Samuel erected a stone between Mizpeh and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer "the stone of aid."

## What do we learn from this chapter?

1. **We are bound by prayer to God**, and we triumph over Satan.
2. **The sacrifice** (receiving the body and blood of Christ), results in God's forgiveness of us and our sins.
3. **That prayer, with sacrifice, is the practical solution to our problems** and hardships.

### 1) Samuel's sons

Joel and Abia were

corrupt, they accept-

ed bribes and did not judge fairly, but it seems that these things happened later in their career, and that they were in a location far from their father's supervision. He was in the north (Ramah) and that they were in the south (Beersheba), therefore, God didn't punish him as He did with Eli the priest.

### 2) The elders of Israel requested

a king to judge them, which Samuel regarded as a rejection of him, but God asked him to respond to the people within the framework of the human freedom granted by God to the people, because they refused not Samuel but the Lord himself by asking them to establish a king who belonged to them. God warned them by Samuel that the king would rule over them, enslave them, and use them to serve him and his entourage, but they insisted on having a king.

## Chapter 8



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### 3) The people of Israel wanted to be like other nations and did not

recognize that the Lord should be their king, their shepherd, and their leader and they should not jeopardize that. The secret of victory is to take refuge in the name of the Lord of Soldiers.

#### 1) The Lord chose

Saul for them, his

name means “re-quest/desire,” because they wanted

a tall good-looking king with a strong build. Although he had good features, he was not entirely genuine; wealth, money and dignity revealed the distortion of his heart. “There was not a more handsome person than [Saul] among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.” (1 Sam 9:2).

#### 2) The Lord Planned for Kish,

Saul’s father, to lose his don-

keys. When Saul went to look for them he encountered Samuel, who reassured him that the donkeys who had been lost for three days had been found.

#### 3) Although the donkeys are

not a valuable asset, Saul

searched diligently for them. He cared about his father’s feelings, he sought the advice of others and was thus ready to offer a gift and not enter the house of the Lord emptyhanded. While the amount of the offering was small, it is the act of giving, rather than the amount given, that

## Chapter 9



.....So that you surely

*Rejoice!*

truly matters, as can be seen in the story of the widow with the two mites (Mark 12/Luke 21).

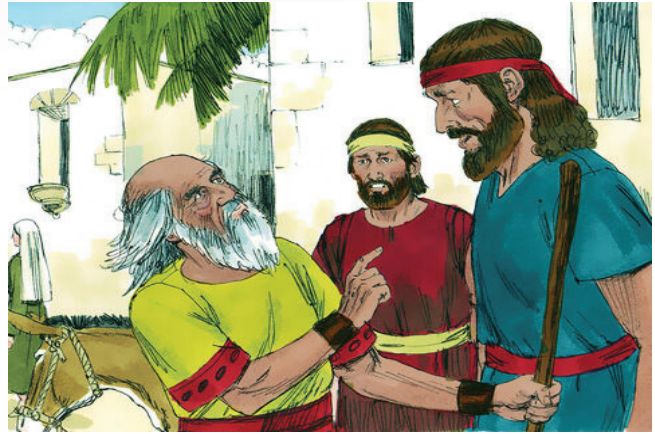
### *What should we learn from this chapter?*

#### **1. However simple and trivial**

**events** in our lives may seem, they are subject to a divine plan and order.

#### **2. We should give with a heart of**

**joy**, generosity and offer our best to the Lord.



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**1. Samuel the prophet took the bottle of oil and poured it on Saul's head** to anoint

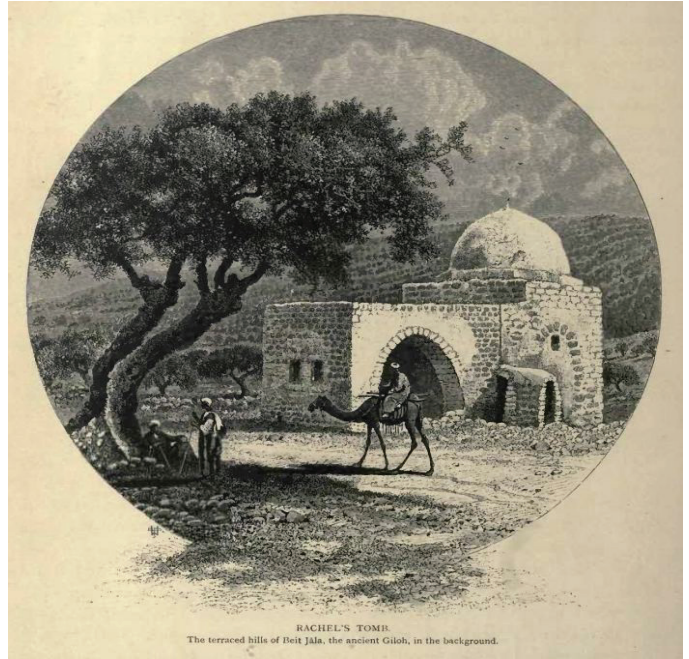
him as king of the people of Israel. Oil was poured on the priests, the prophets, and kings to anoint them. Samuel then foretold to Saul what would happen to happen to demonstrate the events are part of a divine order, not mere coincidence.

**2. In order to teach him a lesson at the beginning of his royal life,** God asked him to visit Rachel's grave, and then met with three

men with three goats, three loaves, and a bottle of wine. They gave him two loaves of bread, one for him and the second for his servant. Because he was not a priest, they did not give him a goat. This emphasized that Saul should not interfere in the work specific to the priesthood. They also did not offer him wine because it is a sign of luxury.

**3. Samuel the Prophet founded the "School of the Prophets"** to develop preachers, teachers, and chanters. Saul would encounter a group of prophets and the Spirit of God would come upon him, and he would prophesy with them, praising God with joy and rejoicing. Therefore, Saul learned at the beginning of his royal life:

## Chapter 10



**1- To be preoccupied with the heavenly world** and not the mortal earth (his visit to Rachel's grave).

**2- To be confined to necessities** (two loaves) and not to ask for luxury (wine).

**3- Not to exceed his limits**, by practicing priestly work and offering sacrifices (not giving him a goat).

**4- To participate in the life of praise** and to seek the advice of the prophets.

**5- Initially, Saul hid among the luggage when he was chosen as king.** This behavior demonstrated modesty and a sense of responsibility. The question is whether this promising beginning would be maintained.

### 1. The Ammonite,

**Nahash** (meaning "snake"), threatened the people of Jabesh Gilead. So, the people of Jabesh

asked Nahash to make a covenant with them and they would serve him. Seeking to humiliate them, Nahash agreed on the condition that he may thrust out all their right eyes. Nahash represents Satan, the right eye represents the heavenly things, and the left eye refers to chronology, to the earth, to the world's lusts. The symbolism is that the devil wants to strip believers of their spiritual insight and make them look only to worldly lusts, not to the glories of heaven.

### 2. This angered Saul and he collected an army of 330,000 people. He

entered into war with the Ammonites and conquered them, confirming the kingdom of Saul.

## Chapter 11

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## Chapter 12

**1. As Samuel advanced in age, he had gathered the people to testify to his honesty,** and indirectly taught Saul the basis of good spiritual leadership. Samuel highlighted that he was not greedy and didn't abuse his power through theft or bribes.

**2. Samuel told them of the work of the Lord** since he brought them out of the land of Egypt until the victory against the Ammonites.

**3. The people asked Samuel to pray for them** and he said, "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam 12:23), that we may also continuously pray for one another.

## Chapter 13 & 14

**1. Saul prepared a small army of 3,000 men,** and stood up against the Philistines, a great enemy army, which instilled fear in the hearts of the Israelis.

**2. Saul waited for Samuel the prophet.** When the prophet Samuel was late, Saul offered the burnt offering himself; only the priest was permitted to make offering. He was motivated by the desire to hold both political authority and the authority of the priesthood when he had the opportunity. Samuel came and reprimanded him saying that God would have established his kingdom forever, but now it would disappear, because of this inappropriate action.

**3. The Philistines humiliated Israel** by not allowing blacksmiths in their land so the Hebrews had to rely on the Philistines to sharpen their weapons. Thus, on the day of battle, the Hebrews had no weapons.

.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

**4. With strength of faith, Jonathan,** the son of King Saul, and his weapon bearer, walked to the Philistines alone, saying: "for there is

no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few" (1 Sam 14:6). The Philistines thought that there was a great army behind him, and they were confused and afraid. When Saul found it, he asked the priest to consult the LORD in order to disperse the army of the Philistines. But Saul could not wait to receive the advice of the Lord. So, he chased his enemies, but



he didn't pay attention to his soldiers who were tired of the fighting and commanded them that none of them should eat anything until the final victory had been achieved. His son, who didn't know of this, ate drops of honey, and his strength returned to him during the battle, and Jonathan became worthy of death because he had broken Saul's oath. But the people rescued Jonathan for having made a great victory for the people. It was the result of Saul's unthinkable decision, that they ate the spoils that were contaminated with the blood because of their hunger, although the law prohibited that.

**5. Saul won a strong victory** over the enemies of the people of God: he had zeal and courage; did not stop striving; and took every strong and valiant man to his army.

### ***What should we learn from these chapters?***

**1. There should be no encroachment on the authority of the priesthood;** prayer in the church (liturgy or sacraments) may take place only through the priest.

**2. The Lord may save by many or by few.**

**3. Faith** is the source of our strength and our triumph over Satan.

**4. We should not rush** our judgments and we should be considerate of the needs of others.

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## Chapter 15

**1. The Lord commanded Saul, through Samuel, to fight against Amalek,** and utterly destroy everything they had and kill all men and beasts because they were corrupt and committed many crimes.

**2. Saul didn't obey the word of the Lord;** he left the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good. Everything that was vile and worthless, those they utterly destroyed.

**3. Saul claimed that he had left the good sheep and the good cattle to offer a sacrifice to the Lord.** Samuel said to him: God

will not be pleased with sacrifices, in light of disobedience: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams"(1 Sam 15:22).



### ***What should we learn from this chapter?***

1. We Shouldn't justify and excuse our wrongdoings. Saul wanted, or so he claimed, to offer sacrifices to the Lord, at the expense of his obedience to the Lord and of his commandments.
2. The sacrifice of God is the broken and humble spirit "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit" (Psalm 51:17).

.....So that you surely

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*Instructions: Read the Epistle of St. James*

The first letter of Joy is the letter “J”

I achieve my joy with my Lord Jesus inside the Holy Bible, which is the breath of God, by reading regularly in the Books.

The Book of James is considered one of seven books called the Catholic Epistles, which also include: two books of Peter; three books of John; and the book of Jude.

“Catholic” means collective and it’s called by this name because it was written to collective groups of people (everyone) not to a single person or a specific city. A reading from the Catholic Epistles is read in each liturgy after a reading from the Pauline Epistles.

The writer of the book is St. James, a cousin to Jesus Christ, therefore, he was called the Lord’s “brother” because cousins were called brothers at that time. St. James was a bishop of Jerusalem and presided over the Jerusalem council at around 50 AD. He was titled “righteous” because of his zealous adherence to the law and his love for worship. His knees were described as those of camels as a result of his persistent kneeling in prayer. The Lord appeared especially to him after the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7).



To whom was it written? It was written to Jews who live outside Jerusalem (diaspora) and Christians with Jewish origins who were scattered abroad due to Jewish persecution.



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**Time of writing:** At the time of Jewish persecution to the church (60-61 AD).

**Place of writing:** Jerusalem where St. James was a bishop.

**Why was it written?** 1- Encouragement to persecuted believers  
2- Clarification of the necessity of both faith and good deeds  
3- Emphasizing the seriousness of some sins that might be thought trivial.



## *Chapter 1: Believers and Trials*

**Main Ideas:** Introduction and Salutations; Temptations and Victory; Sources of Temptation

**Key Terms:**

- ✦ Verse 1: the saint didn't mention his relationship to Jesus, but he calls himself "servant of the Lord" because of his humility; compare to Saint Mary describing herself to the Archangel Gabriel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Luke 1:38)
- ✦ Verse 1 "tribes": family, kindred
- ✦ Verse 1 "scattered abroad": dispersed
- ✦ Verse 6 "wavering": hesitant
- ✦ Verse 12 "he is tried": tested
- ✦ Verse 26 "religious": spiritual

### ***Trials and Victory (Ch 1:2-12)***

(1:2) The believer rejoices in different trials: disease; death; material loss; persecution. The reason for our joy is our confidence that this trial is refining our faith, is allowed by God, and we can bear this trial if:

1. The believer acknowledges human weakness and asks God for wisdom. God will provide despite our weakness and will not mock us.
2. Wealth and poverty may both be a trial to the person, the poor should be proud in the glory of God, and the rich should be humble before God. True wealth is found in the spiritual not in the material (9-11).
3. When we think about heaven and eternal life, we can bear every trial and tribulation without complaining (12).

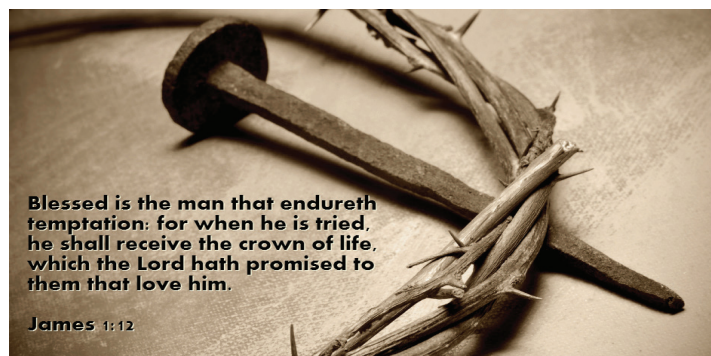
### ***Sources of Trials (Ch 1:13-18):***

- 1- Allowed by God for our growth and refinement.
- 2- To protect us from pride; like the thorn in the flesh of St. Paul.
- 3- To protect us from stumbling in sin through the temptation of the devil.

Therefore, God does not tempt us with evil, but allows us to experience trials, and disciplines us (which we might perceive as bad) for our own good: "For whom the Lord loves he chastens" (Proverb 3:12 & Hebrews 12:6).

(Ch 1:19-27) St. James describes some different temptations that we face as believers and how to deal with them: to rush to speak; anger; impurity; self-deception; neglecting the word of God; an unbridled tongue.

St. James advises us to overcome these temptations by:



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- a) Adhering to the word of the Scripture and carrying out its commandments.
- b) Saving ourselves from the filth of the world.
- c) Practicing true religion in the form of visiting widows and orphans.

***What do we learn from this chapter?***

- A) Don't be sad or complain about trials and tribulations but ask God for help.
- B) Listen to the word of God and abide in it.

## ***Chapter 2: Faith and Deeds***

***Main Ideas:*** Warning Against Favoritism; Faith and Deeds

***Key Terms:***

✚ Verse 8 "royal law" means love.

St. James advises on errors in worship such as favoritism between the rich and poor (verse 1-13) and the strong relationship between faith and deeds for believers (verse 14-26).

***Favoritism- Partiality (1-13):***

1. This chapter begins by emphasizing that all are brethren and wealth does not elevate any one of the brethren above others.
2. Discrimination based on wealth is not becoming of Christians and harms the poor who will feel diminished based on material wealth; this will also harm the rich because it will lead to temptation to sin in the form of pride.
3. We should love the poor as we do the rich because this is a royal law of the heavenly King, Jesus Christ, so we should show no favoritism.

4. Do not underestimate favoritism as though it is a trivial sin. There is danger in sins that seem small so that we might not notice them but could be what prevent us from entering the kingdom of heaven.

### ***Faith and deeds (14-26)***

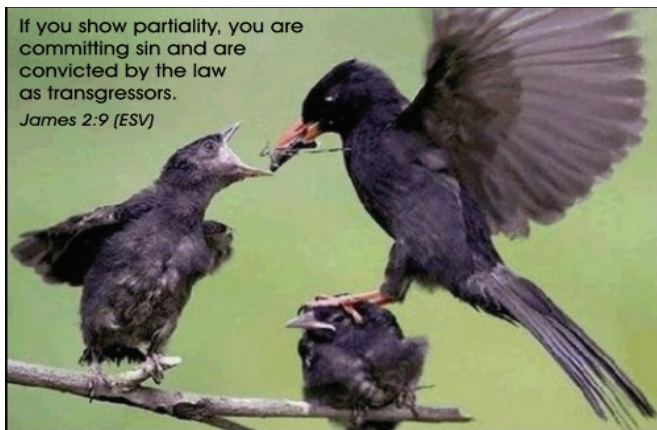
Like a bird has two wings and could not fly with only one, it is impossible for a person to depend on faith alone, without deeds. St. James explains:

a) Actions speak louder than words. If we speak only to those in poverty, but don't meet their needs, we have not made an adequate contribution.

b) Faith without deeds is dead; faith must be proven to be in us.

c) Even the demons believe in God, so faith alone does not save; unlike them, the faithful do good works.

d) Abraham believed in his heart; therefore, he presented Isaac and confirmed his faith through his action. By his deeds he completed his faith.



If you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.  
James 2:9 (ESV)

e) Rahab, as well, believed in her heart in the capability of Israel's God; when she hid the spies and pledged to save her and her family when the city was attacked she confirmed her faith in action.

f) Like the body and the spirit cannot be separated, faith and deeds cannot be separated.

### ***What should we learn from this chapter?***

1-Don't favor the rich, but treat everyone the same.

2- We must perform deeds to confirm our faith.

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## Chapter 3: Tongue and Wisdom

**Main Ideas:** The Tongue and Its Danger; Wisdom and How to Express It  
**Key Terms:**

- ✦ Verse 2 “bridle”: hold or control
- ✦ Verse 6 “set on fire”: set on fire
- ✦ Verse 12 “vine”: grape vine
- ✦ Verse 17 “easy to be intreated”: obedient or subordinate

The apostle warns us in this chapter from sins of the tongue, although the tongue is a small organ, it is like the bit in the horses’ mouths which controls them, or the very small rudder that guides the ship. Also, he talks about some errors of the tongue such as:

- ✧ Love of Teaching: despite the necessity of teaching the believers so no one perishes from ignorance. There is danger in “love of teaching” because it might result in pride, and arrogance.
- ✧ Defiling of the body: a person loses peace and the ability to pray and praise God.
- ✧ A loose tongue: the believer can control the tongue with God’s help in order to speak, be silent or choose words wisely as appropriate at a given time. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Proverb 25:11).
- ✧ Cursing people: an evil tongue curses people; but we are reminded



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these who we curse were made in God's image.

1. Nebuchadnezzar used his tongue badly (Daniel 4:30-33), so he suffered for years! So too Herod Agripas I (Acts 12:21-23) and he was eaten by worms and died.

2. Therefore, we must have true wisdom, which is characterized by purity, peace, kindness, meekness, mercy, and without hypocrisy. This can be achieved by asking God's help.

3. The apostle warns us against the wisdom of men as opposed to the wisdom of God. That is earthly, sensual, and devilish cunning through deception, hypocrisy, fraud, etc.



### ***Types of wisdom:***

#### ***a- Carnal Wisdom:***

- ☞ Earthly: emanating from loving the world.
- ☞ Fleshly: originated from the human self.
- ☞ Devilish: controlled and guided by demons.

#### ***b- Godly wisdom:***

purity, peace, kindness, meekness, mercy, and fruit of righteousness.

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## Chapter 4: Faith and Earthly Lusts

**Main Ideas:** Earthly Lust; Loving the World; Condemnation; Living Magnification

**Key Terms:**

✝ Verse 14 “vanish”: disappear or vanish.

1. In this chapter the danger of earthly lust becomes clear:

- ✧ We lose our inner peace
- ✧ We lose our peace with God
- ✧ We lose our peace with people

2. The apostle clarifies that when we ask and do not receive it is because our requests are not aligned to the will of God; our own requests will harm us and disrupt our peace.

3. There is conflict in human nature between spirit (which longs for the divine) and body (which longs for the material); therefore, when we love the world we turn away from God and sacrifice our peace.

4. We need two things to overcome evil:

- a) To resist
- b) To draw near to God through repentance and communion.

5. God is the only Lawgiver who has established the laws of love and mercy; therefore, we must not condemn or judge others and in doing so we sacrifice our own peace.

6. God doesn't teach us to be dependable but to depend on Him and since we can depend on Him, He expects integrity from us.



7. In describing life as vapor instead of smoke, St. Paul has selected a metaphor that implies energy, vapor can produce and cause movement. So to, our life on earth, though fleeting, must be productive. Vapor produces but smoke pollutes.

***What should we learn from this chapter?***

- 1) Continuous repentance
- 2) Serve those in need to the greatest extent you can

## ***Chapter 5: Faith in All Circumstances***

Main Ideas: The Wealthy; Swearing; Circumstances of the Believer

Key Terms:

- 🌀 Verse 2 "corrupted": deviating
- 🌀 Verse 2 "motheaten": symbolic of destruction, as moths destroy clothes
- 🌀 Verse 4 "you kept back by fraud": underpaid
- 🌀 Verse 7 "be patient": wait
- 🌀 Verse 9 "grumble": complain
- 🌀 Verse 11 "we count them happy which endure": praise

1. The apostle advises the rich not to focus on their money and not to be unfair to the workers who help them amass wealth.
2. The apostle shows the importance of being honest in speech and action, and the danger of swearing as Jesus Christ warned in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:33-37).
3. Circumstances of the Believer (verse 13-20):
  - ✳ In case of sadness and hardship: prayer is the only way to open our lives to God.

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✳ In case of joy and pleasure: praise God who provides the joy.

✳ In case of disease: call the priest, who can accept the patient's confession and pray for the sick and perform the sacrament of the Unction of the Sick.

✳ In case of wandering brother: show concern for his salvation by trying to bring him back to God through the church.

4. The apostle presents two examples of Old Testament heroes:

✳ **Job:** who was patient and bore trials, temptations and tribulations.

✳ **Elijah:** who was strong and who, when he asked, the heavens responded.



## *What should we learn from this chapter?*

1- Use money to benefit society and not amass it selfishly or focus on it.

2- Pay full wages and don't oppress those who work for us.

3- Keep our answers to "yes" or "no" without swearing.

4- The power of prayer of children of God who keep His commandments.



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Joy starts with the letter “J” for Jesus in whom I rejoice for he is my God who gave His life on my behalf and bestowed a share in the heavenly rejoicing.

### Questions:

1. Who was the first person?
2. What is his wife's name?
3. What is the animal that moves on its belly?
4. What plant is used to make wood?
5. What is the connection between these words? (fall)

We all know the story of the fall when humanity abused the free will that God granted. He put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in front of man in Eden, and warned him from eating from it saying, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die” (Genesis 2: 17).

Unfortunately, man abused this freedom and fell due to the serpent's temptation, and he excommunicated himself from true joy. Some people think that the punishment of eating from this tree (death) is too harsh, but in fact it's a natural result and it's a punishment. This is because the disobedience



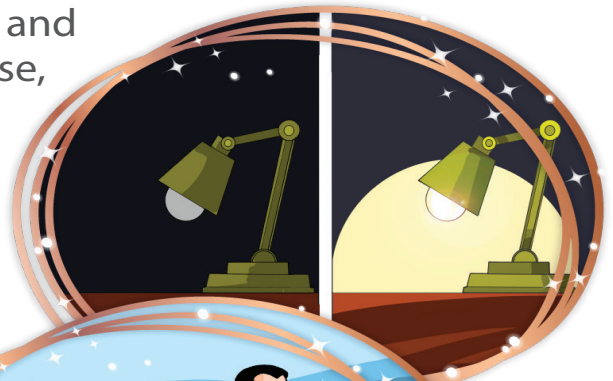
to God's word (sin) is a separation from God, a sin against God. God is complete holiness and is the fountain of life, therefore, when we sin, we separate ourselves from God. And the expected result is death, not only physical death but also:

- ✧ **Spiritual death:** because he is separated from God.
- ✧ **Symbolic death:** because man lost the Godly image in which he was created, and the human nature becomes corrupted.
- ✧ **Eternal death:** because sin leads to doom forever.

Some might ask, since God is love, why can't the resolution be that God forgives and excuses the sin, rather than enforce the consequence?

God is indeed love, and He is full of love and mercy; He is also full of justice. In this case, God set the bounds of justice: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Roman 6:23).

If God forgave man, without enforcing the consequence, the natural result of the corruption of the body would go unresolved. For example, if a father warns his son not to drink from a bottle that has poison and the son disobeys, the son will be in danger of dying. The father might forgive his son, but this would not save him from death. On the contrary, the father would quickly take action to treat his son and make him well. So to is the result to



human nature and the relationship between God and man. So, God can forgive us, and also needed to save us from death through an action that would restore human nature.

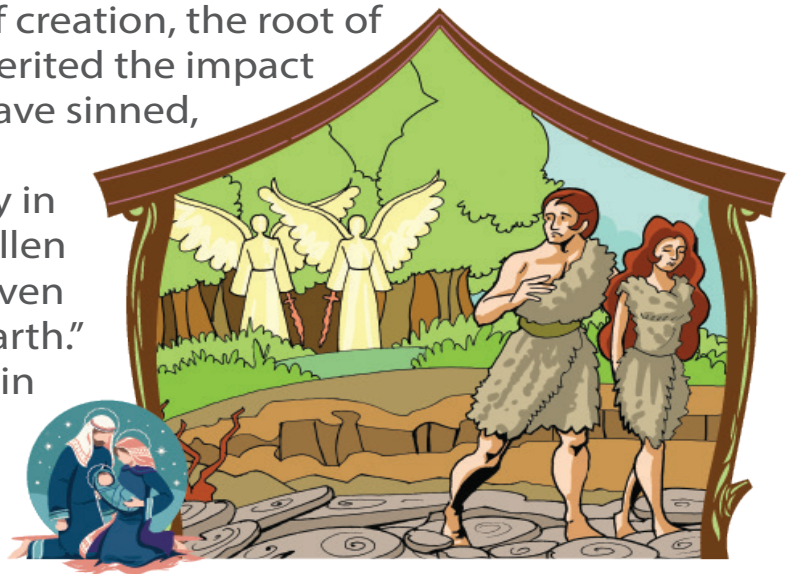
The solution is challenging and seems mysterious, but God has revealed the solution to this puzzle: Incarnation; Redemption; Salvation.

Why didn't God just let Adam die and replace him by creating another man?

- 1- This is not aligned with God's love and mercy. Although Adam ate from the tree by his will, he was deceived by the devil.
- 2- If Adam is left to eternal Death, this will challenge God's dignity because it would mean that the devil could conquer Adam and cause him to sin and die. This could then be the fate of all men and would not be a suitable outcome for the most beloved of God's creation.

It is Adam who sinned and it is who would face the consequence of death. What of his children? Why do the descendants of Adam face death given that Adam is the one who sinned?

Adam is the crown and head of creation, the root of all humanity; therefore, we inherited the impact to our human nature, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). As we pray in the litany of those who have fallen asleep, "no one is without sin even if his life was just one day on earth." The power of the devil and of sin is reflected in the stumbling of men when we succumb to temptations.



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## **The result of man's sin is:**

- 1- Death
- 2- Corruption of the human nature

Of course, God loves humanity, and does not wish for man to die, so, **what is the solution?**

It is a redeemer who would die according to His own will instead of, and on behalf of, mankind: "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

## **What are the conditions and signs that must be in the redeemer who could atone for all humanity's sins?**

**1) Human:** because the doer, the one who sinned, was a human.

**2) Can die:** because the wage of sin is death.

**3) Sinless:** because whoever does not have a thing cannot give it.

**4) Unlimited:** because sin was against the unlimited God.

**5) Creator:** to renew human nature and return it back to its origin.



Can all these conditions be possible in anyone else except God? Perhaps as an archangel or a prophet? Of course, the answer is "no." Therefore, the Incarnation is the only solution because no one else can complete redemption except God's Word who was incarnated. Since God fulfills all conditions except being a human, thus he took on humanity in order to

act on behalf of man, He is like us in everything except sin.

How then does God become a human? Is His incarnation against His dignity and holiness? How can it be that the uncontained mighty God could take on the weakness of humanity?

We pray a beautiful hymn during the Christmas feast called “E Parthenos”: “Today, the virgin bears Him who is transcendent, and the earth presents the cave to Him who is beyond reach. Angels, along with shepherds glorify Him. The Magi make their way to Him by a star. For a new child has been born for us, God before all ages.”

Because God is capable of doing anything, it is not difficult for him to become a man. The incarnation does not have an impact on God’s divine qualities or His dignity. He is able to take on our nature and sanctify it without reducing His holiness. God initiated the process of redemption and salvation by incarnating in St. Mary’s womb and taking on all qualities natural to a human, without any sin. The Lord Jesus then died on the cross, was buried and rose after 3 days, fulfilling the prophecies about the Messiah. By His incarnation, death and resurrection God answered the difficult question of how the redemption of humanity could be achieved while sparing His beloved creation. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

### ***But how can we get this salvation?***

**1-Faith:** I must believe in Jesus Christ as a redeemer and a savior. He is the redeemer and the ransom at the same time.

**2- Baptism:** I must be baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity; the Lord Jesus Himself demonstrated baptism by submersion.

**3- Purity:** I must live a life of purity and holiness through continuous repentance and confession.

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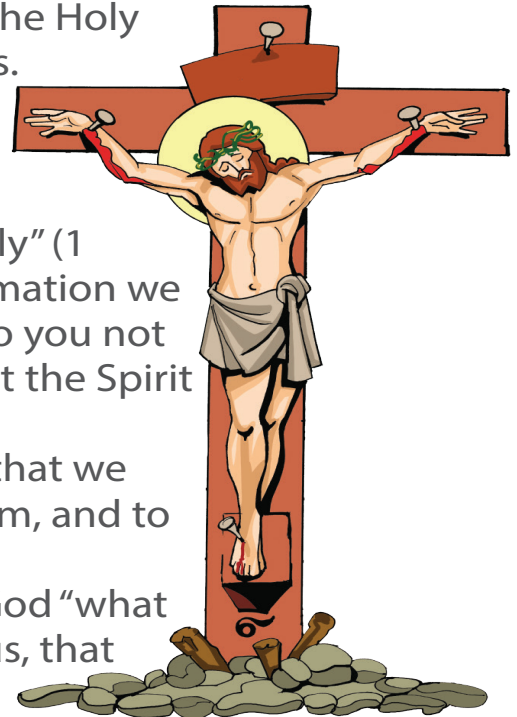
**4- Community:** I must regularly attend the liturgy and partake of God's Holy Body and Blood in Communion, to receive the blessing of steadfastness in Him and growth in His love. In this way I can share of the fruit of virtue from his Fatherhood and glorify Him.

**5- Preparation:** I must be watchful and ready in the hope of his covenants so that I will meet Him when we meet our resurrection and rejoice in eternal life.

As St. Paul says, ***"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."*** (Philippians 2:12-13).

***Then, what are the goals of the Divine Incarnation?***

- 1) It was necessary for the Second Person of the Holy Trinity to be born and die for us, to redeem us.
- 2) To unite Divinity with humanity in order to renew the human nature which had been corrupted by sin. To give us unlimited possibilities and holy life "Be holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Likewise, with Baptism and Chrismation we became a temple in which God can dwell: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).
- 3) For God to reveal himself to us more fully, that we may see with our eyes, touch him, listen to him, and to know him (1 John 1:1).
- 4) In order that we may become children of God "what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1); by adoption we become his children, and we pray saying, "Our father who art in heaven."



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5) To forgive our sins (both Adam's original sin, and the sins we commit and for which we repent and confess), "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Roman 3:23).

6) To then send us the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, purify us, comfort us, and rebuke us when we sin.

7) To be victorious over Satan (Luke 10:19), with our freedom we choose the way of life not the way of death.

8) To give us resurrection from death, and eternal life with Him in heaven (John 5:21 & Romans 8:11); to restore man to our original status.



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## Ways to Rejoicing at Church

The second letter of the word "Joy" is "O" for Other. Our joy is achieved when we praise with others: the archangels; saints in heaven; and believers on earth.

Praise is the highest form of prayer because it shows man's marveling at God's work. Through praise we draw near to God and feel His presence. Therefore, it is said that praise is the food of archangels and is heavenly work. The angels' work is continuous praise, and they have no other job. Praising is an expression of thanksgiving for the marvel of salvation.

For example, when the people of Israel escaped from the oppression of Pharaoh, they praised God.

When David was victorious over Goliath, he and all the people praised God. In the fiery furnace, the Three Youth too, praised God. Praise is an inheritance of our forefathers; they tested prayers through their experiences

and present-fathers have written reflections of praise.

Praise also is an expression oneself in relation to God: through Praise we express feelings like contrition, reverence, joy, pain, and victory. In fact, the Psalms clarify that the goal of man's life is praise: "While I live will I



praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being" (Psalm 146:2-10). Also, the Psalms reflect the psychological stages a person might go through. For example: "How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?" (Psalm 13:1).

We call the group of prayers and praises that precede Matins prayers (the raising of incense on the eve and early morning) Tasbeha and this group of praises and prayers is included in preparation for Liturgy. Praise is the work of archangels and saints in front of the Throne in Heaven, "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1).

We all participate with them in joy during this activity. The church in heaven and the Church on earth participate together

1. We are all one Body in Jesus Christ.
2. Praise has an amazing power to correct bad tendencies and sanctify thoughts and sensations.
3. It is a method to maintain and transmit the correct Christian creed through the generations.
4. It is an effective way to fight evil spirits, arrows of the enemy, and victory over them, "Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your glory all day" (Psalm 71:8).

Midnight praises start with the following order:

The hymn of "Ten Theno" ("Arise") is sung at the beginning of Tasbeha, it begins with a gentle sound and then becomes a loud and powerful tune: "Arise O children of the light, let us praise the Lord of hosts." It is an invitation from the church to us to leave laziness and sleep and wake up to rejoice and praise our Savior who blessed us with life.



## A) Achieving the Impossible (The First Canticle)

The word "Canticle" means "praise" ("Maren Hose" means "let us praise") and the first is Moses' praise, with his sister Miriam, and children of Israel (Exodus 15) who sang after their salvation from Pharaoh's slavery by crossing the Red Sea. It is a praise of victory and triumph. Why did the Church put it in the beginning of Tasbeha Because Pharaoh and his soldiers, who enslaved children of Israel, were an example of the Devil and his soldiers, who enslaved the children of Adam.



As the children of Israel were rescued by passing through the Red Sea, Jesus Christ redeemed us with His Cross, and with Him we cross over from death to life by baptism which is the first sacrament; thus, we enter heaven and eternal life.

Psalm of the first Canticle (Khen o-shot): "Split the waters" is an explanation of the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt by the miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea.

During the week (except Sunday) we sing sections seven, eight and nine of the Sunday Theotokia after the Gospel reading "Lord, now you may let your servant depart in peace, according to your word" (Luke 2:29).

Why these three sections? Because they talk about the Incarnation. The salvation of the people from the oppression of the Pharaoh was a symbol of salvation of humanity from the oppression of the Devil, through the incarnation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And when we understand this, our hearts are full because of our rejoicing in God's love.

.....So that you surely

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### **B) Thanksgiving (The Second**

#### **Canticle) (Psalm 135)**

This is a hymn of praise about joy, salvation, and triumph. The Church offers praise and thanks to our Good Savior for His eternal goodness and mercy. The second Canticle has twenty-eight verses, and we respond to each verse with "for His mercy endures forever." In the Psali of the second Canticle (Maren-oo-onh),

we express our happiness and thanks to God who granted us salvation. In Maren-oo-onh, we thank Christ our God with David the Prophet and express our joy to God who granted us salvation.



### **C) The Fiery Furnace (The Third Canticle) (Daniel 3)**

This is the hymn of praise of the Three Youth in the furnace. Every person is vulnerable to temptations during his life from evil people. The Three Youth triumphed because of the presence of God inside the furnace with them. They are an example of God's children who conquered



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worldly lusts: "Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you" (John 16:22).

God is with them and leads them. This praise invites all creation to praise God for His work. Even the sun glorifies God in its existence: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handywork" (Psalms 19:1).

Just as the Devil wanted the Three Saintly Youth to burn inside the fiery furnace, he wants us to burn in the fire of his temptation. Likewise, just as God saved the Three Youth, we rejoice in God's salvation and protection from the temptation of the devil. God gives us victory through the sacrifice of His Body and Blood on the Cross.



Aripsalin: This is the praise of people who enjoy the company of God, who are happy with His power. It is the praise of the Three Youth (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), while they were inside the fiery furnace. Its verses are arranged from Alpha to Omega (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet).

Ten-oweh ensok: is a part of the Prayer of Azariah, who prayed alone inside the furnace, and it means "we follow you with all our hearts." It is the introduction to the Commemoration of the Saints

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#### **D) The Commemoration of the Saints:**

This praise is to saints from the Church in Heaven who intercede for the church on earth. They conquered worldly lusts, evil, and many temptations by the power of God. They became saints and became examples and role models for us. We should request their intercessions and prayers. When we see these examples, we will be encouraged and strengthened. We will see their crowns and rejoice and persevere in our own battles.

“Doxology” is a Greek word which means “veneration of saints.” Through the Doxologies, we receive the blessing of the glory that the saints have reached.

There is a doxology for Saint Mary, the archangels, the heavenly hosts, etc. There are also other occasions in the church where we praise with doxologies and use tunes of thanksgiving and joy.



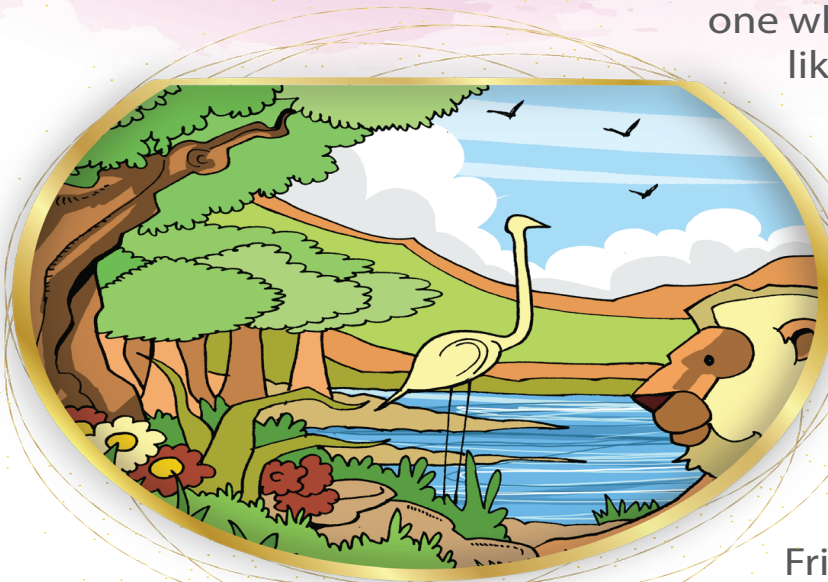
#### **E) Joyous Praise (The Fourth Canticle)**

The Fourth Canticle contains the final three Psalms of David the Prophet (148, 149, 150) and it is an invitation to praise with all creation “Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful” (Psalms 147:1).

The Psalm of the Day: Here we praise or venerate our Lord Jesus Christ and we mention the name of our Lord Jesus many times. He is a fortified tower; we take refuge in Him from Satan’s schemes. We pray saying: “Every-

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one who says, 'My Lord Jesus,' is likened to a sword, casting down the enemy." There are two types of Psalies:

**a) Adam Psali:** Used on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday - it has a short tune.

**b) Watos Psali:** Watos is a Coptic word meaning "bush"; it is used Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday and has a long tune. Everyday has

a Psali, in addition there are Psalies for

church occasions. Psalies are a heartfelt prayer, and those who pray the Psali saying "my Lord Jesus" have a full and happy heart with Christ. We pray saying "Remembering Your holy name, brings joy to our souls."

**Theotokia:** Theotokia is a Greek word meaning "hymn to the Mother of God." A Theotokia is theological and creedal in nature and the Church praises with the Theotokia throughout the week. The Church chants her faith in orthodox spirituality. When she praises, she confesses and announces her faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ, our God, the Incarnate Word. Our salvation is achieved through the hypostatic union of divinity and humanity in the one nature of Jesus Christ and through the mystery of His marvelous birth, and the relationship of this mystery to Saint Mary, God's mother, the Theotokos.

#### **F) Antiphonarium ("Defnar"):**

A collection of short stories of the saints of each day read in the monasteries during the Midnight Praise.

**The Conclusion of the Theotokia:** The Adam Theotokia concludes with "have mercy, O God" which invokes, in the soul, emotions of repentance, confession, and trust in God's mercy. Watos Psalies have the ending "our

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Lord Jesus Christ” and express our waiting for the Second Coming of our great God and our yearning for eternal life at the conclusion of the earthly lives we’ve lived in holiness and preparation acceptable to our Lord. Conclusions: After the ending of the “Theotokia” we say, “We magnify you Mother of the true Light...” until the end, and we recite The Creed in full. After that, we pray Kyrie Eleison along with different requests for our bodily, psychological, and spiritual lives. Then we pray “Holy, Holy, Holy” until we pray the “Our Father.” Then the priest prays the midnight absolution for priests only.

Through the holy Liturgy, we unite with God, and He dwells within us, and we dwell in Him. The Church cries out with the sounds of joy and thanksgiving: “Our mouths are filled with joy and our tongues with praise because we have partaken of Your immortal secrets, O Lord.”

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). We pray saying: “Thank You, Lord,” “Make me one with You,” “Guide me in the path of Your will,” “I direct my mind and thoughts to You, bless them and guide them to Your will,” “I live and focus on what is Yours.” These prayers allow us to be on a journey of ascent from earth to heaven and with each step we ascend higher, in the end we will arrive to our true joy, to be in the presence of God, through the rites of the church.

Try it. You will never be a spectator. Praise gives us a sense of the promise of eternity. All those who praise feel joy! So, what is this joy? It is a guarantee of an eternal, happy life. After he finished, the artist Michael Angelo had painted a wonderful ceiling, which was one of the most wonderful things he painted. He could not read anything or meditate on a drawing unless he lifted it up. That is because he has been looking up for a long time, so it is almost harmful to him to look down. My dear, when you train yourself to look constantly at the glories of the sky, there will come a time when you will not be able to look at the glories of the earth.

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The last letter of the word "Joy" is "Y" for "Yourself." Joy is achieved here with myself, my talents, and the gifts that God gave me.

There are people who are talented at drawing with paint brushes, but did you ever meet someone who draws with words?

Yes, words can be used like a variety of colors. Each word has a unique beauty in itself. The artist knows how to mix words together in harmony to produce a beautiful painting; their sentences have a nice, influential, useful, comforting, and convincing meaning that appeals to the listener. You are invited to be this artist. This is called communication which creates bridges and meetings between people, groups, and individuals. It's based on the exchange of opinions, ideas, and knowledge between people, whether this exchange is verbal, using words, or non-verbal, using motion, expressions, images and includes facial expressions and body language.

Words that we say are the main way to express what is inside us, by them we communicate with others. Consider the



# Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

expression, "the tongue is like a new pen, it writes on the heart whether good or bad" and what the Bible says, "Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing" (James 3:10).

Compare between two scenes:

### **1. First scene: Read (Acts 19:24-34)**

After Timothy and Erastus preached Jesus Christ, with St. Paul, Demetrius felt he was in danger and that the people of Ephesus were agitated, he was a silversmith, which made silver shrines for the goddess Diana, he worried that their presence and the spread of Christianity would lead to:

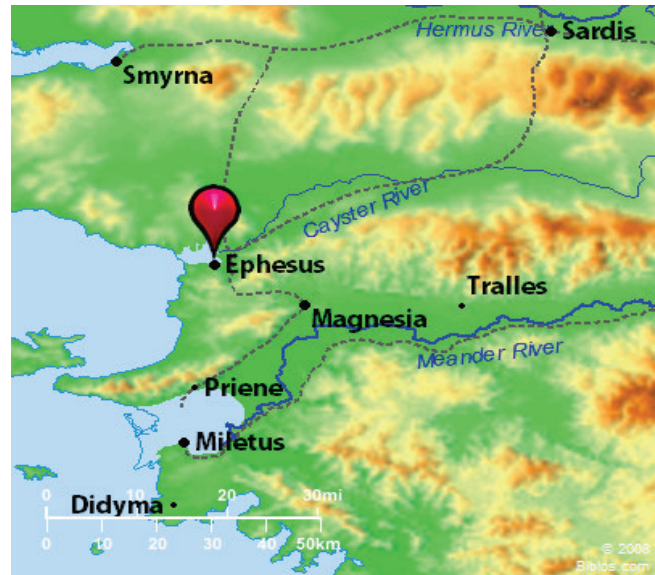
- 1. Deprivation of income that he gains from shrines**
- 2. Loss of their dignity if their goddess Diana becomes a fake goddess**
- 3. Distortion of the picture of Diana**



The city of Ephesus was filled with confusion and people revolted and seized Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia who were Paul's companions in travel, and they pushed them in front of them.

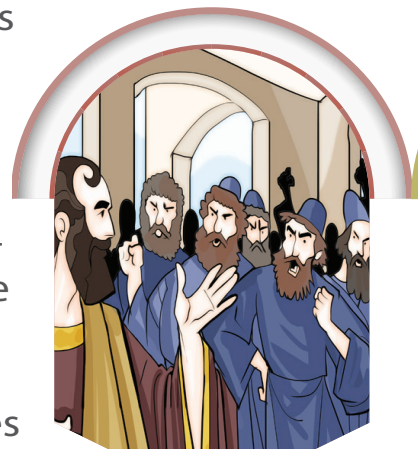
A Jewish man of Jewish origin, Alexander, who was often believed to have believed in Christ and then rebelled (2 Timothy 4:14-15), intended to throw Gaius and Aristotle to the monsters. Saint Paul the Apostle wanted to enter in unto the people, but the disciples did not allow him; he wanted to face the rebels bravely and graciously to save his companions and prove their innocence. The dis-

ciples prevented him and stopped him, as well as the superiors and the wealth of his friends, so that he might not be consumed by their evil. The Jews pushed Alexander and commissioned him to explain to the assembly that Jews were not Christians. The reason for this is that the Ephesians did not distinguish between Jews and Christians, and Alexander wanted to prove the Jews innocence of the actions of Saint Paul the Apostle. It was important to Alexander that the Ephesians did not include Jews in their revolt as well because the Ephesians discovered that Alexander was a Jew, and the Ephesians did not like Jews who did not respect their God. Also, in their view, there was no difference between Christianity and Judaism. Therefore, the audience prevented Alexander from speaking and cried out and cheered for their gods for about two hours "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." In pagan religions, we find the worshippers of the gods defending their gods, but for us who worship the living God, it is He who defends and protects us.



## **2. Second scene: Read (Acts 19:35-41)**

The clerk of the city, a senior official of the city as its chief of office, was the one who communicated between the administration of Ephesus and the Roman rulers. He feared that the Romans were punishing the city for this riot. He calmed the situation by affirming the unmistakable solid acknowledgement of the people's support of their gods. He also noted Demetrius and Timothy were not blasphemers of their gods or robbers of the temple so they were no real threat. Saint Paul the Apostle uses positivity as he teaches and preaches Jesus Christ, and



His light and power which makes the darkness of the pagans flee.

Pay attention to the difference between the two scenes....

"A sweet word multiplies friends, and appeases enemies, and a gracious tongue in a good man abounds" (The Book of Sirach 6:5).

"Grace will be found on the lips of the intelligent" (The Book of Sirach 21:16).

"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

### First, what is communication, then?

Communication is a process of transmitting and receiving information, feelings, and ideas from person to person, in order to establish a meaningful and fruitful dialogue, in which both parties benefit from each other's experiences. Therefore, communication becomes effective when the participants succeed in conveying

and receiving the message in an easy and understandable manner. Was the definition of communication achieved in these scenes? If the answer is "No," what was not available in the previous two scenes?



### Second: what do we want to achieve with the communication?

1. Deliver information.
2. Foster Interaction.
3. Persuade.
4. Share feelings.
5. Encourage.
6. Spend time in amusement and entertainment.

### Third: Elements of communication

- ☞ **Speaker:** the person who prepares and sends the message.
- ☞ **Listener:** the person who receives the message and answers it.
- ☞ **Message:** the information the wants to convey to the listener.
- ☞ **Feedback:** the reaction of the listener.

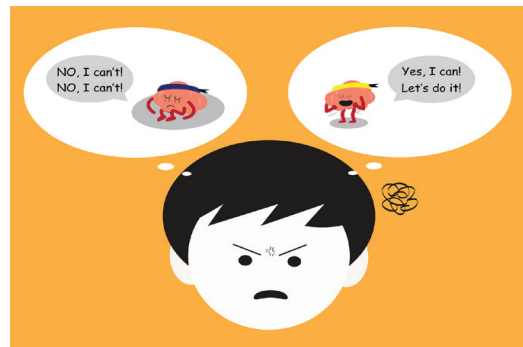
We read together the story of the Lord Jesus and the Samaritan at the well in John 4:4-30 and see proper communication within this dialogue.



### Fourth: Types of communication

**1. Internal communication:** Between man and himself, such as the example of the Prodigal Son: "And when he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no longer worthy to be called your son: make me as one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:17-19).

**2. External communication:** Communication to others; this communication occurs in everyday life, such as the Lord Jesus' dialogue with the Samaritan, Nicodemus, etc.



### General conditions:

**The speaker must:**

- ✦ Express interest in the conversation partner
- ✦ Use language that the other understands and appreciates
- ✦ Takes into account the feelings of the listener.
- ✦ Ensures that the message is correctly understood
- ✦ Chooses the right time and place
- ✦ Understands the nature of the listener or message receiver
- ✦ Uses the magic words of “please” and “thank you”
- ✦ The listener must:
  - ✦ Listen carefully
  - ✦ Summarize what the communicator said
  - ✦ Listen intently without rushing to give an opinion
  - ✦ Avoid developing their own thoughts on the subject while trying to listen
  - ✦ Avoid interruption of the speaker

### **Fifth: Barriers to communication**

- 1- A lack of care for the other
- 2- Body language that is incompatible with the words exchanged
- 3- Prejudgment, you may have a negative mental image of the person with whom you are speaking, which impedes communication.
- 4- Different objectives between the speaker and the listener.
- 5- Difficulty of understanding in the case that the speaker uses terms and concepts that are not entirely clear to the listener.
- 6- The existence of personal differences between the two parties of communication such as the way of thinking or the culture.
- 7- Loss of confidence by the listener if the credibility of the speaker is weak or shaken.
- 8- Listener's indifference to the message or speaker.

.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

How many times have you said to your friend or anyone you've spoken to, "You misunderstood me, that wasn't my intention"? Of course, it is not uncommon. So, there are often failures in communication. So, take care to attend to conversation carefully and contribute to understanding and the meeting of the minds.

***What kind of a speaker are you when you speak?***

***The Book of Proverbs summarizes the characteristics of speakers:***

- 1-Talks too much (10:19)
- 2- Hypocrisy (11:9)
- 3- Harmful word choice (12:18)
- 4- Ignorance (18:76)
- 5- In a hurry (20:29)
- 6- Soft spoken (15:1)
- 7- Words fitly spoken (25:11)
- 8- Pleasant words (16:24)

Examine these verses to reflect on what kind of speaker you are when you communication with others.



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

Memorization

## Midnight Prayer

Arise, you, O 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, and grant us alertness, in order that we 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.

ΔΟΞΑ ΣΙ ΦΙΛΑΝΘΡΩΠΕ

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 unto the Holies, and bless the Lord. The Lord shall bless you out of Zion, He who made heaven and earth.

ΔΟΞΑ ΣΙ ΦΙΛΑΝΘΡΩΠΕ

Let my supplication come near before You; 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.

.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

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

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

Glory to You O the good and lover of mankind. Hail to Your mother the Virgin and to all Your Saints. Glory to You, O Holy Trinity; have mercy upon us.

Let God arise, and let His enemies be dispersed; 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.



*Rejoice!*

*Deuteronomy 16:15*

Memorization

## *Psalm 12*

How long, O Lord, do You forget me, for ever? How long do You turn Your face away from me? How long do I put these counsels in my soul, and these sorrows in my heart for the whole day? How long does my enemy exalt over me?

Look, hearken to me, O Lord my God: enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep in death; lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him": those who distress me will rejoice if ever I stumble. But I have hoped in Your mercy; my heart will rejoice in Your salvation. I will praise the Lord Who has done good to me, and I will sing to the name of the Lord Most High. ALLELUIA.



.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

Memorization

## + The Gospel of the + First Watch

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; 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 to God forever.  
Amen.**



Rejoice!

Deuteronomy 16:15

Memorization

## + The Litanies of the First Watch

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 ἁγιω 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 νυν κε ἅ κε ις τοις ἐὼναις των ἐὼνων: ἁμην

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 νυν κε ἅ κε ις τοις ἐὼναις των ἐὼνων: ἁμην

.....So that you surely

Rejoice!

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 ασιω 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 soulsly glory.

Κε νυν κε αϊ κε ις τοις εωνας των εωνων: αωην

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.



Rejoice!

*Deuteronomy 16:15*

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Rejoice!

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

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*Deuteronomy 16:15*

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Rejoice!



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