

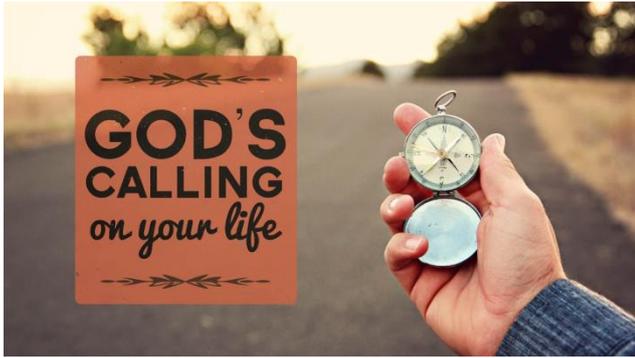
The Mar Thoma

ECHO



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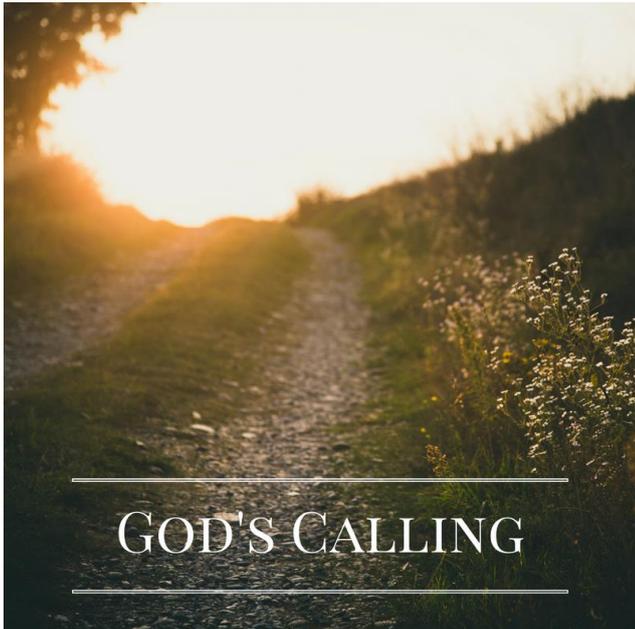
Editorial

God's Calling

Hosea 2:8 &14

'She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold...'

'Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her.'



The nation of Israel was chosen by God and set apart for Him as an example of His faithfulness to and love to restore those lost to sin. His ultimate plan in the redemption of human kind was fulfilled through Jesus Christ, born into the tribe of Judah. In this issue of Echo, we would like to focus on God's calling in our lives. What it means for us as individuals, as a church and the impact of that calling in our communities.

It is quite appropriate to ponder upon His calling as we get ready to embrace a new year. It would be worth reflecting how the past year has served us and how we can prepare ourselves to delve in to a new year with its limitless possibilities and opportunities. While we may go in length to

reflect on our failures and missed opportunities, let's be wise in responding like Apostle Paul, 'But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ.'

The year 2018 has been particularly eventful. We witnessed many triumphs and tragedies and yet amidst all the gloom, there were stories of courage, hope and perseverance. We witness the Thailand cave rescue mission where a number of trapped children were rescued which can only be described as truly heroic and selfless. As a Keralite community we witness and some of us experienced the calamities severe flooding caused to our homeland. We heard awe inspiring stories of bravery, courage and selfless acts by the fishermen community and several organisations, individuals who served with a purpose of calling towards the rescue missions.



The issue of Brexit has caused uncertainty and the consequences concerning for the Indian diaspora in UK. Amidst all these we need to seriously consider whether the referendum is just and sought with the best interest of its citizens or based on a false sense of security. As Christians we need to consider if we are seeking God's agenda in

all these or if we are building walls, lulling our senses to ignore the suffering of many around us. How deeply a no-deal Brexit will affect our nation, we have yet to see. Right now it's urgent that we seek God's will in this and pray about it.

Let us duly remember that our primary calling is to be followers of Jesus Christ. We are asked to take up our cross and follow Him (Luke 9:23). We often try to equate 'calling' with the activities we do in church or for the community or the effective use of talents we have. But at the centre, if the motive and source is not Christ, we are pleasing ourselves. Sometimes God brings us to a desert or a valley to speak to us tenderly what His ideas are for us. We have to reach at the end of ourselves to hear Him better and know what His calling is, whether it is vocational ministry or serve Him where He has placed us. It's ignorance to associate our personal dreams and goals with His calling. May His Holy Spirit give us a heart to discern His great purpose for each one of us. Finally, remain encouraged because "God, who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

ECHO Editorial

Jesus on the cross

John Binu Jacob St. Johns MTC UK

A symbol of my faith

That strengthens me each day.

To walk through the narrow ways.

God's own son

Gave his life for me

In a place called Calvary

To let us thrive

He guide's us in time

Of dirty crimes

So, I run my race

Empowered by his grace.

To give him all the glory.

Eschatological Views in 2nd Peter and its relation to the rest of the New Testament.

Revd. Shibu Kurien, St Johns MTC.

Introduction

Second Peter is an apologia of primitive Christian eschatology. It deals with a crucial question of the meaning and significance of the Parousia. What is the Parousia? When will it occur? What will happen when it does? It is a question of the relationship between the faith of the apostolic generation and every generation that follows. Based on the eschatological skepticism the false teachers taught, “the apostolic proclamation of the Parousia was a myth (For we did not follow cleverly devised myth... 1:16). The false teachers argued that Jesus is not coming back and therefore there will be no judgment. There exists a temptation of the believers to return to their former way of life. Therefore, the Second Peter refutes false teachers (2:1), their theory and praxis, and reinforces stability and commitment among the faithful through reminder of their divine gifts and calling. The author encourages his community to raise to the moral heights their vocation demands. Therefore, the purpose of Second Peter is twofold: to expose the false teachers for what they were and to set before the churches the conditions of survival when doctrinal and moral perversions infiltrate their fellowships, appearing to carry all before them. This article is an attempt to describe the eschatological views of second Peter and its relation to the rest of the New Testament.

1.1. Audience of the Second Peter

Second Peter is addressed to a congregation or congregations in the region

of Asia Minor where Paul established churches (1 Peter.1:1 “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” 2 Peter 3:1, 3:15-16). These churches were predominantly Gentile churches. They are the people who came to faith from a pagan rather than Jewish background. According to John H. Elliott “Second Peter was directed to a Christian community to which converts from paganism (2:20), assuming the mantle of teachers (2:1) had began to challenge traditional Christian beliefs and norms of behavior.” The Epicurean philosophy influenced the audience of Second Peter because it is very popular in Jewish and Greek thinking. Therefore the author taught the audience against this philosophy and affirms the providence of God in judgment, both past and future (2:3b-10a; 3:5-13) and the truth of the prophecies that undergirds it.

1.2. Philosophical Influence



The philosophical world in which Second Peter addressed was the Epicurean way of life, which sought to avoid trouble and increase pleasure for its followers. They affirmed

1. “There was not a creator involved in creation
2. Providence destroys free will.
3. The world came into existence by chance, so there is no foreknowledge as that would require a predetermined order.
4. Since people incur injustice by the delay of the “gods” in coming to their recues, any

“gods” that exist must not engage in rewarding or punishing mortals.”

1.3. Eschatological Skepticism – Skepticism about the Future

The opponents or false teachers in Second Peter raised the question of “why



does Jesus delay His return?" They argue that Jesus is not coming back and therefore there will be no judgment. This question influenced some of the believers of the churches and they fail to recognize the reality of the return of Christ. The opponents taught the Parousia and judgments are apparently a delusion; they are free to conduct their lives according to their own passions. Some believers deny Jesus authority and redemption and proclaim a message of freedom from ethical living in favor of indulgence of the body's pleasure desires. It leads the young believers of the churches astray from their commitment to Christ and the ethical life, to which calls them. They supposed freedom from judgment as a release from the commandment of the Lord (2:21; 3:2) and a license for self-indulgence (2:2; 10a, 13, 18), pleasure (2:13) and personal gain (2: 3, 15-16). Therefore, the question and the Epicurean worldview reflect a kind of agnosticism that was growing in popularity in the first century.

1.3. Eschatological Teachings in 2nd Peter

With the influence of the Epicurean philosophy, the false teachers taught that the Parousia did not happen. They were denying the Parousia because, according to the apostolic proclamation, the first generations of Christians were to have experienced the Parousia, but died without its materialization. They taught it was a myth (2:3b; 3:4 everything goes on just as it even though the fathers have died...). They argued “everything was remained the same; nothing has changed. Christ has not come; the Parousia has not taken place. Why then the church continues to hope that the Parousia, and the judgment that attends it will occur? Is the prophecies that foretold the Parousia and the witness of the apostolic generation that testified to the Parousia, were mistaken?” The question is not about the mechanics of Jesus' return or its truth but taken to another level when the delay is used as an excuse for ungodly behavior. Some persons in church have backslidden into the accompanying behavior of licentious and shameful ways of pagan immorality.

In his, letter the author refuting the eschatological skepticism. He emphasizes the apostolic tradition, which affirms the Parousia and its judgment. This tradition is founded on the teaching of Peter (1:12-18), Paul (3:15b-16), the other apostles (1:16-18; 3:1-2) and the Old Testament prophetic witness (1:20-21; 3:2). The author emphasis the power of the gospel, which enables believers to escape from the corruption of this life so that they can, participates in God's life.

1.3.1. Transfiguration and Morning Star- Power and Glory of Jesus (Hope for the Parousia)

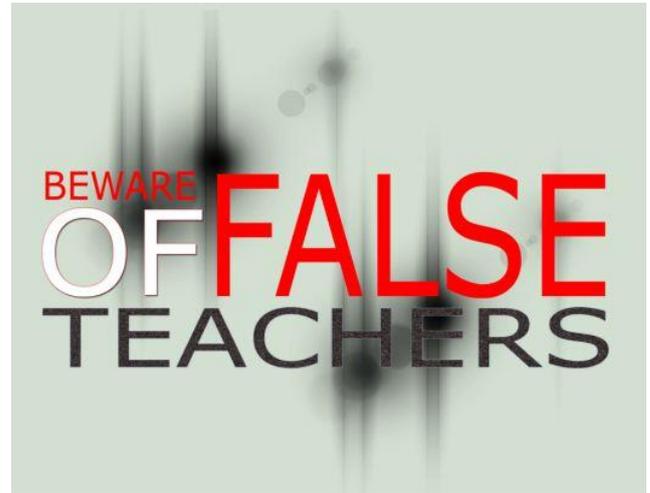
In the church, the false teachers argued the message of Jesus was a myth. Therefore, the author taught the believers Jesus is the savior who provides everything that they need for all aspects of their life (1: 3-11). This is not simply a provision for spiritual life but rather a provision for every part of life. In 1: 16-21 the author refuses two objection raised by the false teachers.

1. The apostles employed 'cleverly devised myths' when they proclaimed the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. The prophetic word was merely a human word rather than God's word.

He takes transfiguration as the example of the power and glory of Jesus. In the transfiguration Jesus kingship made evident. The event of the transfiguration functions as a reason for expecting the return of Jesus. Jesus glory revealed in the transfiguration and at that moment, His identity is unveiled before His disciples. God proclaims that Jesus is the beloved Son and such an announcement on the mountain gives the kingdom of God a location and a purpose that is larger than the particular geographical and political focus and it is forever. The kingdom is both about the physical provision that the king makes for his subjects and about the full realization of a kingdom that is now and tomorrow and forever. The author taught that a day would come when Jesus himself will bring about the transformation of the world, even as the rising sun transforms the present world from darkness to light. The transfiguration and the metaphor of the morning star remind the believers that what is seen is only a part of the ongoing reach of the

Kingdom of God. The kingdom is forever, and it is glorious, honourable, already begun, and still to come. He assured his community that their hope for the Parousia grounded in a reliable apostolic witness.

1.3.2. Eschatology and Judgment



The false teachers taught the community two significant problems

1. They deny Jesus and his redemptive work (2:1, ...they will even deny the Master who brought them).
2. They taught that in Christ they are free to act upon their desires in an unrestrained fashion (2:2, Even so, many will follow their licentious ways, and because of these teachers the way of truth will be maligned.) They exploit the believers for their own ends.

The author related the eschatology with judgment with the examples of God's past judgment against the angels who sinned (2:4 For if God spare the angels when they sinned...), the flood generation (2:5....when he brought a flood on a world of the ungodly) and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6 and if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes ...). Through these examples he shows the future judgment rests on the Lord (2:9, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from

trial and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the Day of Judgment). He affirms that God controls the end and He executes the justice and judged world. Judgment will come in God's time, for he is the one who is storing up the heavens and the earth until the coming of the Day of Judgment (3:5-8).

1.3.3. Delay of the Parousia – Lord's patient

The false teachers challenged the validity of the Lord's promise that He will return (3:4 where is the promise of his coming? for ever since the ancestors since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation). Peter answered through the words of 3:5-8. He argued God created the heavens and the earth by His Word and at His command that world can be destroyed as it was in the great flood recorded in Gen.7. In Verse 7 he used the word fire as a means of judgment (Deut: 29:23; Isa. 3:9, Jer. 23:14). He reminds that the world has not always goes on as they now see it and that this should remind them that judgment would come despite their false message. Judgment would come on God's time, for He is the one who is storing up the heavens and the earth until the coming of the Day of Judgment.

In 3:8-10, the author puts forward two arguments, both already traditional in Jewish apocalyptic treatment of the issue of eschatological delay.

1. God who determines the time of Parousia. He is not limited by human life span, but surveys the whole course of human history (3:8.... the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and the thousand years as like one day Ps. 90:4).

2. The delay is a respite, which God has graciously granted to his people before his

intervention in judgment. Therefore, the sinners have opportunity to repent and encourage condemnation (Exod. 34:6; 2nd Peter 3: 9 ...but is patient with you, not waiting any to perish, but all to come to repentance). The delay of the Parousia is not a sign of forgetfulness or indifference but shows that he wishes to make it possible for more people to be saved.

In verse 3: 10 the day of the Lord would come as unexpectedly as a thief in the night (Matt. 24:43; Luke 11: 39; 1 Thess. 5:2). 3: 10b pointing towards the destructions of the heavens and the fundamental elements of the earth by fire. There are three main arguments are here

1. The form of the world will be destroyed
2. The heavenly bodies will be destroyed (Isa. 34:4; Matt. 24:29)
3. The angelic power or hostile spiritual powers will be destroyed (Gal.4:3; Col. 2: 8,20)

In 3:11-13, the author reminds the believers to live holy and godly lives as they wait for God's justice. In the Bible, God's judgment by fire is a recurring image. Something may survive the fire of God's judgment is alluded to in several places in the Bible (Isa. 33:14-15; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2; 1 Cor. 3: 13-15). It emphasizes two main concerns



1. To demonstrate that God's work of judgment is sure.

2. To call to believers to faithful living in the light of God's judgment.

In 3:14-17 he advised the believers to manifest patience, remain steadfast in faith, hope, and to avoid all schisms and inconsistent behavior. Because of the ignorance and 'lack of stability of Christian faith' some of them misinterpreted Paul's teaching of coming of the Lord, Judgment (1 Thess. 4:13- 5:11, 2 Thess. 1:7-10, 2:1-12) and the teaching of Christian liberty. Therefore, the author once again remained that the way of the false teachers is the way of the destructions rather than path of life.

1.3.4. Hope for the Parousia-Transformation

The author emphasizes the Parousia will not be the end of the world (3:12) but the occasion of the transformation. In 3:13 (But, in accordance with the promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home) the hope is firmly grounded in the book of Isaiah (Isa. 65: 17; 66:22) and it echoes in 2nd Peter (1:1; 2:5, 21). So 2nd Peter emphasizes if there is no Parousia there is no judgment. If there is no judgment, there is no righteousness. If there is no righteousness the world will not be transformed. Therefore, the hope of the Parousia is an indispensable element of Christian faith. That hope portrayed as in terms of new heaven and new earth filled with God's righteousness, affirms that God will have the last word. The central affirmation is, there will be a final redemptive act of God that will set all things right.

1.4. Relation to the rest of the New Testament



The expectation that Christ would come 'soon', presumably in the generation then living, is amply attested in all parts of the New Testament literature. There are 'sayings of Jesus' preserved in the Synoptic Gospels that hold out the hope of some kind of immediate return or reappearance of the Son of Man to His disciples (Matt.10:23) or an appearance of Christ in the life time of the hearers (Mark: 9:1; 13:30). The Gospel of Mark sets forth an imminent eschatological perspective. The Parousia of the Son of Man is expected (8:38; 13:26) and the Kingdom of God is to come "with power" during the first generation of the followers of Jesus (Mark.9:1). In Matthew shares the view of an imminent expectation (25: 31-46) and the final judgment. In Luke the possibility of the delay of the Parousia before the coming of the Son of Man and other end-time events (9:27; 12:45; 17:20-21; 19:11), but his coming and his exercising of authority in a final judgment are certain. In John's Gospel hope for the future is not set aside, but the experience of future salvation (5:25, 28-29; 6:27, 39, 40b, 44, 54b, 12:48; 21:22-23) and the present experience (3:36; 5:24; 6:40a, 47, 54a, 10:28; 17:2-3) of salvation have begun to merge.

In Pauline tradition, the Parousia was soon to happen, bringing with it the wind up of history (1 Thess. 4: 11,13-15). In 1 Cor. 15:51 Paul pictured those who will be 'still alive' when the Lord appears from heaven, and he can write about the time of the end being 'near' (1 Cor. 7:26, 29). Paul's understanding of the tension between what is now and what is still set in the future at the Parousia to come (1 Cor. 11:26; 15:23, 50-52) the final kingdom of God destined to take over from the interim 'reign of Christ' (1 Cor. 15: 20-28).

Both traditions, however, are aware of the problem posed by the Parousia and its apparent delay. The Synoptic tradition insists that no one knows the day or hour of the Parousia, not even the Son. Therefore, the disciples must work as industrious servants until their Lord appears. The Pauline tradition is also aware that no one knows the time or the season of the Parousia, and it deal with those who deny the resurrection of the dead and act as if the end time has already arrived. In the deuteron Pauline letters, although hope for the future has not been set aside, Paul's apocalyptic vision begins to give way to a scenario that speaks of the believers inheritance in heaven rather than the general resurrection of the dead.

In 2nd Peter, the Parousia will be the definitive movement of God's judgment, and it will effect a transformation of the world as it is presently known. The description of the Parousia in Paul, the Gospels, and 2nd Peter may differ, but the central affirmation does not change. There will be a final redemptive act of God that will set all things right.

1.5. Summary of the Findings

1. The false teachers with the influence of Epicurean philosophy questioned the delay of Parousia and the judgment and encourage the believers to conduct their lives according to their own passion.
2. The author defended the false teachers teachings and taught the believers that the hope of the Parousia is
 - a) It grounded in a reliable apostolic witness. The apostolic eyewitness to the transfiguration
 - b) It based on prophetic testimony
 - c) God's past judgment of sinners
 - d) The power of God's Word to destroy as well as to create
 - e) The realization that God does not acts as humans do.
3. 2nd Peter proposed an 'interim ethics' for Christians awaiting the drawing of the final day of the Lord. Between Christian conversion and cosmic consummation, believers were to grow in the gifts and their stability and salvation by resisting the false teachers who deviate from the prophetic and apostolic norms of truth. With patient confidence each believer await the promised day of the Lord.

Conclusion

In this epistle, eschatology is more closely integrated. Its eschatology thoroughly appropriated and digested both in the mind of the author and in the life and thought of the audience. With the influence of the false teachers, the believers' mistake to think that eschatology has nothing to do with the present day. He reminded the community that God is Lord of time. No human effort will enable to know when the Jesus Christ will come. We are entered the final phase of this 'age' which will end with the return of

Christ. The Church itself is an eschatological phenomenon. The resurrection of Jesus Christ and Parousia are the core of Christian faith. So the task of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel to the world and looking towards the end.

The life of Christians is the life of hope accepting all the implications of social relationships and the realities. We die to be reborn to a new life. Our faith in the everlasting life is seriously threatened by the contemporary cultural and theological context. The consumeristic world of secularism seems to be fixing its gaze only in the life here. The theology of the resurrection affirms our hope, determines our Christian identity today, and sets our lives in the light of the Kingdom of God. Otherwise, there will not be any meaning for our struggle and endurance.

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In my Father's Hands

Ligy Mary Thomas

Belfast Mar Thoma Congregation.



2 Chronicles 20:15(b) This is what the Lord says to you, “Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army .For the battle is not yours but God’s.”

The everyday battle of our lives is like a war against the worldly problems, among these battles the promises of our Father above can help us fight these battles like he fought for Jehoshaphat in the above context.

When according to the world, Jehoshaphat was facing a situation that was impossible for him to win against the vast army of Ammon and Moab, he put his faith and hope on the God who can make the I-am-possible out of the impossible.

Few of the important pointers that can be implied from the 2 Chronicles 20 are the following:

Seeking the Lord:

2 Chronicles 20:4 The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord, indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

Trusting and seeking hope in a hopeless situation from the one and only one who can give hope.

The bible is full of characters who were blessed immensely when they walked in the way of the Lord. One such person was Ruth, when she had lost everything dear to her, she followed her mother-in-law Naomi leaving her people and country and was blessed immensely.

Thus, the time for seeking the Lord takes a lot of patience and waiting to allow God to work out his plan for us. *Ephesians 2:8* For it is by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not from yourselves it is the gift of God.

1. Do not be afraid:

“Fear not” is a word that has been used throughout the Word of God .When we are in the midst of a difficult situation the first emotion we have is of a fear , fear of an unknown but with God on our side we can say confidently as in *Psalms 23:4* Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil for you are with me; your rod and staff they comfort me.

David a youngest of the sons of Jesse faced Goliath without a fear relying on God (*1 Samuel 17:45*). Our Father has already planned out our yesterday, today and tomorrow even before we were born and he will never allow us to get burdened which we cannot bear.

1. Take up our position:

The third pointer encourages us to continue our responsibilities by submitting ourselves completely and

putting our trust on our God and not to allow our troubles to be reflected in our work areas, home and school.

In *2 Chronicles 20:21* Jehoshaphat led his army to fight his enemies, leading his army and taking up his position by trusting on the Lord's promise. *Mathew 6:33* But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.

2. Stand firm:

The Lord asks us to be standing firm and not to waiver even when we face the shadow of death as our Father has conquered the death to give us an eternity with him. A prominent character in the bible is Job who stood by his hope in God even when he had lost everything, he didn't question his sufferings and allowed God to mould his life like a clay in the Potter's hands. Finally, Job 42 elaborates the blessing God has in store for Job's faithfulness.

To conclude, this life is a gift from our Father in heaven and each day is his grace and mercy which we can never get back so each moment of our lives should be lived in complete obedience in our Lord as he is holding us always in his arms to protect us from all the hardships of life as in *2 Corinthians 2:9*: "However. As it is written:" What no eyes have seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has ever conceived "-the things God has prepared for those who love him."

The Authenticity of the Bible

Mr. Steevan and Mr. Dibin, St. Johns Mar Thoma Church, UK

Many a times we as Christians often don't push back when people say the bible is made up and books like the Da Vinci code question the Word of God and it's authenticity. Despite hearing sermons every Sunday we don't seem to take the message in. Despite having Bibles in our homes, we doubt our Bibles and our Christ. Let us explore the Bible, the book that can help us understand our purpose on Earth and the love of the Father.



Is the Bible authentic? What are the evidences of the Bible's genuineness? How do we know if the Bible we have today is the same one written thousands of years ago? Many times, we have been asked by friends to explain "what authority the Bible had?". When faced with such questions it has led us to question our belief in the Bible and has made us feel insecure.

And why is this important? If we do not believe in the authenticity of the Bible, then we will not believe that the Bible is the word of God. And we will miss that incredible gift that God gave for us – our Lord Jesus Christ. We explored this topic in detail in our teenage fellowship class.

What does scripture say about the Bible; what is the Canon & how were the books put together; that strange set of books the Apocrypha; how does the old & new testament compare with the other books of history and ancient writings in reliability, accuracy and authenticity and did the dead sea scrolls weaken or strengthen the already existing books of the Bible?

Let's start with what the bible says about itself and How did Jesus use the Bible? As we read in Matthew 4:4 Jesus answered Satan and resisted temptation by referring to the scripture. Jesus showed us the need to rely on spiritual food rather than physical food.

Deuteronomy 4:2 says 'You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you This verse emphasises God's authority. It shows how scripture is inspired by God and merely written by humans.

2 Peter 1:20-21 reads "No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Although they used their own minds, talents, language and style, they wrote what God wanted them to write".

In 1 Timothy 3:16-17 it says "all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work". We are to believe so that we can live in the way God wants us to.

The author of Hebrews makes it clear that God's word is to help us understand right

from wrong as it says in Chapter 4 verse 12 "for the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." The imagery used shows us that word of God is simply not a collection of words from God, but it has dynamic and life-changing words which penetrate to the core of our hearts. With the incisiveness of a surgeon's knife, God's word truly reveals who we are. It is through being aware of this which will allow us to fulfil God's purpose and allow us to lead meaningful lives within this world.

But the question we need to ask ourselves is – Do we really believe that the Bible is the word of God?

Let's look at the compiling of the canon, which is our modern-day Bible. So, what is scripture? Scripture, simply put means authoritative writing. What is the canon? The Canon is a list of authoritative writings. The word 'canon' comes from the Hebrew and Greek word meaning a 'reed' or 'cane'. Simply put... it is a measuring stick. It came to be applied to the Scriptures, to denote that they contained the authoritative rule of faith and practice, the standard of doctrine and duty. A book is said to be of canonical authority when it has a right to take a place in the scriptures.

Determining the canon was a process conducted first by Jewish Rabbis and scholars and later by early Christians. However, it is crucial to understand that it was ultimately God who decided what books belonged in the biblical canon. A book of Scripture belonged in the canon from the moment God inspired its writing. It was simply a matter of God pointing His creation

which books should be included in the Bible in the power of His Holy Spirit.

In the first and second centuries after Christ, many writings and epistles were circulating among the Christians. Some of the churches were using books and letters in their services that were false. Gradually the need to have a definite list of the inspired Scriptures became apparent. Heretics were starting to circulate their own collection of what they thought was the "authoritative" writing. There was a need to know. The Emperor Diocletian also persecuted the Church with intensity. He ordered that the Scriptures be burned in 303 AD. This highlighted the need to know which of the books were really God-given and worth dying for.

Heretical movements were rising, each one choosing its own selected Scriptures, including such documents as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Mary, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Epistle of Barnabas, etc.

Therefore, due to the disputes, the books had to go through a special process to maximise its effectiveness. The following 5 tests were used:

1. Was it authoritative? - did it come from the hand of God?
2. Was it prophetic? - was it written by a man of God?
3. Was it authentic? Basically, the fathers had the attitude of "if in doubt, throw it out" policy. This helped enhance the "validity of their discernment of canonical books."
4. Is it dynamic? -did it come with the life-transforming power of God?
5. Was it received, collected, read and used? - was it accepted by the people of God?

Now let us look at the reliability of the Old Testament manuscripts. The Jewish sacrificial system was ended due to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. This had led to the Jews being scattered and this had developed a need to determine which books were the authoritative writings.

The Jews became a people of one Book and it was this Book that kept them together. So while they gathered together in 90AD (in the Council of Jamnia) it was to confirm what was already in place as early as 150B.C.

Compared to the New Testament, there was much less controversy over the canon of the Old Testament. Hebrew believers recognized God's messengers and accepted their writings as inspired by God. Similarly, we as Christians should listen to God's word to be instrumental in living a life that God want us to.

<p><i>The Law (Torah)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Genesis 2. Exodus 3. Leviticus 4. Numbers 5. Deuteronomy <p><i>The Prophets (Nebhiim)</i></p> <p>A. Former Prophets</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Joshua 2. Judges 3. Samuel 4. Kings <p>B. Latter Prophets</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Isaiah 2. Jeremiah 3. Ezekiel 4. The Twelve 	<p><i>The Writings (Kethubhim or Haglography [GK])</i></p> <p>A. Poetical Books</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Psalms 2. Proverbs 3. Job <p>B. Five Rolls (Megilloth)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Song of Songs 2. Ruth 3. Lamentations 4. Esther 5. Ecclesiastes <p>C. Historical Books</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daniel 2. Ezra-Nehemiah 3. Chronicles
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TaNaK

Ever wondered what the Tanak is? Well the Jewish scriptures are in 3 big buckets The Law, called the Torah, the Nebhiim which are the writings of the prophets and the Kethubhim, which are other writings like the Psalms, proverbs, etc. This is also the reason why our old testament and the Jewish scriptures have a different order of the books. The T from the Torah, the N from Nebhiim and the K from the Kethubhim are taken to form the word Tanak – which is actually TNK because the Hebrew language has no vowels.

Look at the incredible accuracy of scribes who copied the scriptures. The scribes continued copying and writing scriptures after the temples were destroyed in 70AD and these books continued to be read in temples. By AD 900 the Masorettes had their texts complete. When the dead sea scrolls, were discovered, some manuscripts were dated as old as 150BC. And when they compared it to the Masoretic texts, the accuracy of these texts with the Dead Sea scrolls were 95%! A 1,000 years later – copied from memory without cut and paste and google – 95%! Isn't that awesome?

The Apocrypha is only accepted by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. The Apocrypha is part of the Old Testament in these churches. The Jewish scriptures do not have them. The Apocrypha failed the 5 tests of Canonisation. While Jesus constantly quoted from the Old Testament never once has Jesus or the New Testament writers quoted from the Apocrypha. Furthermore, the protestant church believes that there are several false teachings in the Apocrypha

such as forgiveness of sins via almsgiving. So, it deviates from the central theme of Christianity – salvation by Grace by the death of Christ on the Cross.

It was at the Council of Hippo and Carthage where the 27 books of the New Testament as we know it was confirmed. There are 13000 complete and incomplete Greek & other language copies which have survived antiquity. No other work from classical antiquity has such attestation. Other than 12-20 exceptions in texts scholars agree on the texts and the words in the New Testament.

How many of us believe in Caesar's Gaelic wars? Or what about what Aristotle said or Homer's Illiad or what Tacitus the historian wrote of the Roman period?

Many historians and philosophers would stake their life on it and most of us believe it. Guess how much evidence there is regarding Caesar's Gaelic Wars? The documentary historical evidence of Caesar and his Gaelic wars is less than 10 copies!! And this is the important bit. The earliest available copy is in 900 AD. That is

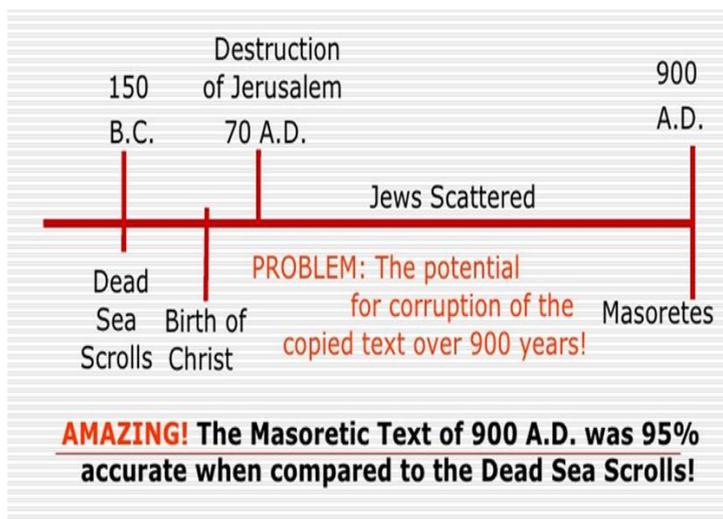
Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Time Gap to Copy	# of Copies	Accuracy of Copies
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	900 A.D.	1000	10	----
Plato	427-347 B.C.	900 A.D.	1200 yrs	7	----
Tacitus	circa 100 A.D.	1100 A.D.	1000 yrs	20	----
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	1100 A.D.	1400	49	----
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs	643	95%
New Testament	1st Cent. A.D. (49-100 A.D.)	c. 130 A.D.	< 100 years	5686	99.5%

1,000 years after the event took place. 1000 years later!! And only 10 copies – but we believe Casee and the Gaelic wars.

Contrast that with the manuscripts there are of the New Testament? There are 5,686 historical Greek manuscripts of the New Testament today. These New Testament manuscripts have 99.5% accuracy, with only minor mistakes in spelling and punctuation. And they were written within less than a 100 years of our Lord's resurrection!! And we doubt the word of God? How dare we?



An example of modern-day evidence are the Dead Sea Scrolls. Just over 70 years ago in



1947, in an obscure cave in the Dead Sea, Bedouin shepherds discovered some scrolls carefully placed in ten jars. Thoroughly confused, these shepherds went to a local dealer and sold the scrolls. This was the opening chapter to an astonishing archaeological find; eventually some 800 different manuscripts would be found in eleven caves near the valley called Wadi Qumran. 60,000 fragments, portions, or complete scrolls of these 800 manuscripts were retrieved, covering many subjects. So as these scrolls were painstakingly unrolled and translated, biblical scholars and Christians everywhere wondered what the results would be. Would they be contradictory?

Even though not all the scrolls are unrolled and translated more than half century later, the answers are coming clear. The texts are amazingly like the documents we already have. The variations are less than two percent, and not a single teaching or doctrine of the Bible we have is altered. Rather than posing a threat to the Christian faith, the Dead Sea Scroll, in fact, provided convincing support for the genuineness of God's revelation as given to us in the Bible. So what were the variations? – well it's spelling mistakes, prepositions, articles etc – no variation from content.

So how did the Bible get translated into what we have today? The first complete English-language version of the Bible dates back to 1382 and was credited to John Wycliffe and his followers. About the time of the invention of printing in 1450, there were only 33 different translations of the Bible. By about 1800 the number had risen to 71. By the late 20th century the entire Bible had been translated into more than 250 languages, and portions of the Bible had been published in more than 1,300 of the world's languages. What an incredible journey.

So, let us not have any doubts about this incredible book which reveals God, our personal and loving Father. The Bible is not

a history book, but it has been validated in history – including archaeology. The reality is that some people still don't treat it as the Word of God. We can have doubts about interpretation or queries and clarifications about what is in the Bible. But we cannot have any doubt about its authenticity or reliability – because if we do, by the same standards, we will need to reject all books of antiquity.

Let us not just read this great book but understand every verse and allow God to read to us. May it help us to imitate our Lord Jesus in fending off temptations by using the word of God. Let us open our hearts to allow God to speak to us to help judge our thoughts and attitudes and help us to realise that all of scripture is inspired by God – it is God-breathed. Treat it with respect and honour. By reading this incredible book, we can find the true meaning and purpose of our life amidst the challenges and confusions that we confront daily and be a witness to Jesus in this world.



SERMON **Ephesians 4:17-24**

Stanley St. Johns MTC

There was a question before the global community, “Is another world possible”. Some social critiques answered, ‘there is no alternative’. In the same way, this particular text asks a question whether an alternative Christian life is possible. Here, Paul speaks about possibility of making Christian life qualitative and meaningful.



The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians is very significant as a theological and devotional document of the Christian Church and is called as the Queen of the Epistles. Even though majority of scholarly opinion casts doubt upon its Pauline authorship, the epistle of Ephesians is believed to be written by St. Paul. We may not be able to discern a specific, historic crisis that elicited Ephesians, but we can see that it is concerned to reassure the faithful, to instruct them concerning the proper ‘walk’ in the world, to alert them to their responsibilities as individuals, as members of their own earthly households, and as members of the church in God’s cosmic plan.

It is a letter intended to accomplish pastoral purposes by adopting a strategy of persuasion. The writer, in order to persuade is creating a symbolic universe. It is this world of religious meaning that forms the

context of the symbols, concepts and ethos providing the theology of Ephesians.

The impact of Paul's mission was felt far beyond the boundary of Ephesus itself. As large center on a major trade route and the capital of

the Roman province of Asia, Ephesus was considered the 'Gateway to Asia'. Additionally, the city of Ephesus was known as a center of pagan worship as the Temple of the Greek goddess Artemis was situated here. This entire area was affected and there were converts everywhere. The gentiles streaming into the church were adopting an easygoing moral code based on a perverted misunderstanding of Paul's teaching.

Most early Christian perceived the world in which they lived as a world of Jews and Gentiles. Ephesians contains four detailed descriptions of Gentiles and their way of life mentioned in the 2nd, 4th, and 5th chapters.

Non-Jewish Christians may or may not be considered among the Gentiles. Those who do not believe are outsiders, 'the other ones' and regarded as sons of disobedience (2:2; 5:6). They lacked the sign of the covenant on their bodies and their situation. Throughout the Septuagint, idolatry is a major fault associated with gentiles. This is portrayed both negatively and positively. Negatively, gentiles are criticized for creating their own lifeless gods. They are those who do not know God. Against this negative background, however there are numerous remarks that speak of gentiles praising God or coming to know God or that addresses the need of believing. Thus, the term 'Gentile' is not an ethnic term; moreover, it speaks to us about the low quality of life. Ephesus was famous for "the Ephesian writings," or magical texts, with the help of which people obtained healing, injury to

foes. In Acts 19:18-19, we see many bringing their magical books to Paul and these

were burned. Magic played an important part in the lives of Gentiles, and converts needed to be taught to do away with the superstition of all kinds. The verses 17-24 urge Christians to abandon totally all the practices of Gentile society and let their new, Christ-given nature control all they do. ----- Paul proclaims in this text that there are two types of existence and he exhorts to diligently fight in order to avoid falling back into the old pattern of life and to stick on to the newness possible in Christ. Before dealing with specific moral injunctions, the writer is reminding his readers about the kind of life they once lived and the need for a clean break with the past. Here, Paul defines Christian life as the new life that is nothing, but the life in Christ. It is a break from the old life. Hence, I would like to title the sermon as "A Call for a Qualitative Christian Life" and let us meditate upon two aspects on this theme.

A Call for a Qualitative Christian Life by Embracing the New Life in Christ:



In this passage, Paul describes the life of the contemporary heathen world as having its origin in a refusal of the will to acknowledge God. This is the hardened heart of a non-believer's inner being. The Greek word used here is 'poros' which means stone or callous. The same word is used to describe the religious leaders who conspired together to kill Jesus after they witnessed the man with

the withered hand healed on the Sabbath. Sin has a petrifying effect and it makes the believer paralyzed to spiritual truth and insensitive to God. This is similar to a veil that prevents a non-believer from seeing God's glory. The Gentile converts carried with them their old self and thereby remained strangers to God. Chapter 2:12 pictures the converts as living without God in the world. This has led to darkening of the understanding, with senseless hearts creating people with no sense of religion or standards of goodness, who are concerned only with their own pleasure and dead to every other consideration. This strangeness made them futile than being fruitful. The Greek word *mataioteti* means 'futile' and 'futility' that denotes idolatry (Acts 14:15) and the idolatrous conditioning of mind. With this one word, Paul describes the majority of the inhabitants of the Greco-Roman Empire, the elements that shaped their culture. Jeremiah 2:5 states that anyone who goes after false gods becomes worthless. The inward signals which once warned against the approach of evil will cease to operate anymore.

Paul admonishes that God have abandoned Gentiles because of their refusal to accept his self-revelation (Romans 1:24, 26,28). Here, Paul is encouraging the gentile converts in Ephesus "to learn Christ" so as to become a devotee or disciple. This is a surprising phrase that calls for an ethical walk of life in order to learn the whole range of the Good News, to uproot from Gentile ways. We are reminded that the truth, as opposed to the ignorance of Gentiles (v.18) is present in Jesus. A recalling of the baptismal teaching is received here. Putting off the old nature is an element in what is 'taught in Christ'. This is employed in an exhortation in Rom 13:12, 1 Thess 5:8 The apparel of the misconceived selves must be

discarded, a radical change is demanded and this putting off, is similar to the parallel thought of Romans 6:6 and Gal 3:27, where Paul talks of an actual death of the old man in Baptism. This imagery signifies an exchange of identities. Paul is giving us a graphic representation of the clothes we used to wear. Most prominently Paul uses the formula of 'in Christ' as the paradigm of a true Christian. It means that the individual who accepted Christ is part of a new humanity of which Christ is the head and is being gathered into the true Israel of God.

To be in Christ...an identity of experience with Christ is essential. The union of our lives with Christ is such that the experiences of Christ are re-enacted in the experience of the individual. Being a Christian means transferring allegiance from the old order, called to share in the sufferings of Christ and own the identity in Christ. The condition of "in Christ" is an experience of being brought 'into Christ' and sustained by being 'with Christ'.

Today, at times the life, death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus are ceasing to be mere external facts of history. Is it becoming living realities in our Christian life setting? St. Augustine's life as a young man was characterized by loose living and of a search for answers to life's basic questions. The teaching of Bishop Ambrose of Milan has made some influence upon him during that time. Once he heard the voice of a child singing a song, the words of which were "Pick it up and read it". of it as a children's game he didn't pay much attention. In a while on realizing that this song might be a command from God to open and read the Scripture, he located a Bible, opened it and read the first passage he saw. It was from the Letter of Paul to Romans chapter 13:13-14 "Let us live honorably as in the day, not

in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy.” This made him change and not much later got baptized. Reflecting on this experience, Augustine wrote his famous prayer “You made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you”. Then after he went on to become a powerful influence on spirituality and theology of the Christian Church.

There is a dialectical relationship between ‘in Christ’ and ‘the Church’ because Paul always speaks of the community of saints in Christ. Thus, in Christ is a short hand for the energy field that is the community. Paul’s understanding of the church involves a deep and mystical identity between his community and the Risen Jesus mediated by the Holy Spirit. Hence, there is this Christological- Ekklesial space which paves platform to acquire New life.

Thus, it is A Call for a Qualitative Christian Life by Embracing the New Life in Church.

The newness of life initiated in Christ is by embracing the same in and through the Church. The whole of Ephesians 4 is a manifesto declaring the inseparability of Ecclesiology and Ethics. New Life is also possible in connection with the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is ‘Ephesians’ best known and most pervasive metaphor for the church. Beginning with 1:22, the church is explicitly identified as the “body of Christ” and the theme continues 10 times in the letter. This language of ‘body’ is a common coinage in the Graeco-Roman world and the gentiles, to whom Ephesians was directed, would have readily understood. The Stoics made considerable use of the body metaphor as a way of describing social groupings. The people in the social groups were members of the body.

Under the Roman emperor Nero (AD. 54-68), the empire was referred to as Nero’s body. In some ways like Ephesians, Nero was said to be the head of his body, ie., empire. This terminology is not that peculiar when viewed against the Graeco- Roman world, but rather provides a ready means for the author to communicate Christ and the church to the gentile audience. The Body of Christ is a fellowship, which is corporate, and ethical that calls for a living culture of organic relationship. Love one another means I am built in a relationship with one another. This is the church what Jesus is building. Living with Christ always provides us with an ethical life in relation to others. *en kristo* is a social concept that intends the discovery of a true community in the body of Christ. It is to be remembered that new life is always a corporate experience. In Ephesians the mature person is a corporate entity, the Church. James Fowler insist on the priority, in vocational existence of community and asserts that there is no selfhood, no destiny, no vocation and no faith, apart from community. Each member of the body locally and globally belongs to all the others. Therefore, all entities must be treated gratefully and

gracefully. The new humanity of Ephesians 4:24 thus has a double reference to both Christ as new man/humanity and the Christian as part of that new humanity created through Baptism. The characteristics of this baptized new humanity are righteousness and holiness, which is to be right with God and moral righteousness of life. Here, Paul focuses on the renewal of our minds, which creates a new sociology in the Body of Christ. The process of renewal of minds to embrace the new life in Christ is an ongoing project of the Holy Spirit. What we think in our minds is a key to being a new creation in Christ.

What we think in our mind, determines how we act. There is always continuity between our actions with our thoughts and attitudes. Christian righteousness always depends on the constant renewing of our minds. Paul exhorts the Christian converts to undergo a radical reorientation of their mental outlook and not yield to progressive deterioration of mind. Rather Paul highlights the inevitability of renewal of mind through the divine spirit. Thus fellowship, righteousness and renewal of mind must be reflected in the ecclesiastical interaction of every faithful. Christianity is much more than a message, it is a new reality, a new life, a painful and courageous transfiguration of old man into the new creation in relation to the Church.

We may think we know people who walk the life of a gentile, but the Pharisee in us will need stern treatment if we try to contrast ourselves with them. This portion is challenging us not to make such contrasts, rather snap right out of pagan attitudes and standards of value and relish the identity in Christ and reveal it in relation to the Church. Thus, experience in and through the Church is a manifestation of the new creation in Christ that replaces the old orders of divided humanity, making it a space that transcends all ethnic, physical and religious divergences, forming a community where members are characterized by their accepting attitudes and actions towards each other.

Shunned and traumatized as a youngster, the 25-year-old Esther Bharathi, the first transgender priest now preaches to congregation of 50 parishioners in Chennai. In her words “I am deeply touched by the acceptance I received in the Church by my parishioners”. Esther Bharathi is one among the many living examples of having realized a new life that stands far away from their

deferred identity by being in Christ and in relation to the body of Christ. Today, The United Nations observes The International Day of persons with disabilities. Are we bothered about the inclusion of disabled people? We must evoke in us, that the Body of Christ is always an inclusive body.

Dearly beloved, today we meditated upon the theme ‘A Call for a Qualitative Christian Life by embracing the new life in Christ and in Church. Yes!, the alternative life is possible in Christ and in Church. In New life, it is not that the material world has been swept away, but a new environment, related to God through justification has replaced the world according to the knowledge of the flesh. A new mind to understand the possibility of new life in and through the Christic experience, a symbiosis with the Lord - which is enhanced further in relationality with the Body of Christ is essential. The challenge before our life is new life, that is a Just life. A life of integrity, righteousness and openness. New Life is possible not in closed rooms but in an open journey towards Christ, through Christ and in the Body of Christ. Let us fasten our belts & have a take off for this New journey.

Translated Lives

*Dr. Christy John W/O Rev. K A Jacob,
Liverpool Carmel Mar Thoma Church*

“May you attract someone who speaks your language, so you don’t have to spend a lifetime translating your soul .”

This piece of writing is a personal account of my stay for the last seven months in UK as a minister’s wife, parent, migrant and student of research. All that I have observed and through my interaction is what I express in my writings. Many view a Non Resident Indian's life as rosy. But it is the story of struggle for survival.

The growth of the Malayalee community can be traced to the emigration history of nurses who crossed the continents and the English Channel to this country of White population. One nurse from each family was instrumental in migration to United Kingdom. The story of the pioneer nurses is an amazing one. Shiny Jacob Benjamin’s *Translated Lives* traces the migration of Malayalee women to Germany in the 1960s. A 40-minute-long documentary, which *Translated Lives* narrates the stories of groups of young Malayalee women, some in their mid-teens, who trained in Germany as nurses. The short film consists mostly of excerpts from interviews with these women.



Post-World War II, Germany found themselves drastically short of trained

nurses. They sent requests for nurses through various churches in Kerala. Thus in the 1960s and early 70s groups of young women left for Germany in search of greener pastures. Teenagers were selected by their bishop after a German bishop requested him for nurses. With practically no training except for a ‘Good morning’ and ‘Good night’ in German, they set off for Germany. Draped in saris, these women were greeted to a snowy Germany. One of the nurses recalls as cotton falling from the sky.

I am fascinated and thrilled by the courage that the nurses and doctors took to dream big and come to the unknown world with totally different language and culture. Hospitals and nursing homes are microcosm of England. We get to know about so many different kinds of people, their lives, their stories, their histories, and so on. This has helped in-depth understanding of British culture and traditions. Such interactions have helped the migrants to integrate with the main stream population.

Migrants try to recreate their cultures, of the place of origin at the place of destination, which results in cultural pluralism. Religion is the crucial element of the global Indian Diaspora experience. This is not unusual, as research has shown that religion is the most common and acceptable basis of community formation and expression for immigrants. Ethnic groups are formed on the basis of shared elements of culture and ideology. The sociology of religion states that religious institutions have played an important role in immigrant adaptation by facilitating the creation of community, construction of ethnic identity and transmission of homeland culture and values to children.

The importance of faith in Christian life and the transplantation of faith to their new

settlement is another character of migration. A church is a symbol of faith in the face of religious and cultural assimilation. Our church has come to define and sustain the cultural and ethnic life of our identity and also a means by which immigrants transmit culture and values to their children. Church is not only a religious institution but like an 'extended family' where the kids are allowed to roam free without restrictions, adults experience the fun of gossiping in native language and feeling of oneness arouse when all stand together for worship. The other day at the Mar Thoma meet, I saw women wore saris, adults spoke quickly and freely in coconut-based idioms native to their state, and rice and homemade curry was served for lunch. Even though they have acknowledged and accepted so many parts of their identity to English, but church is the place where they are truly Indian. The church serves as a pocket of India, preserved like the jars of mango pickle on every Malayalee table.

Early migrants were able to assimilate into new culture themselves but I am introduced to a new generation as being from Britain while not being English. To the question, "Where are you from, then?"

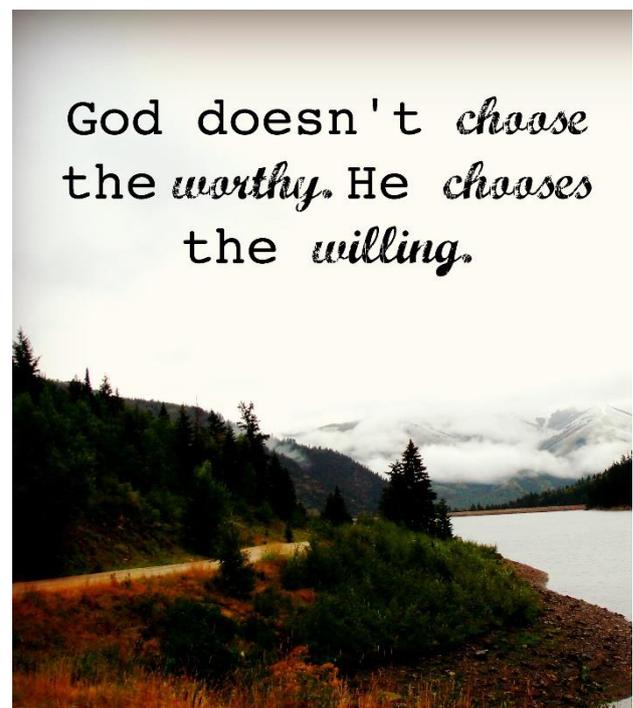
Sam George introduces them as 'Coconut Generation'- a sociological metaphor for being brown from outside and white from inside just as Africans are called 'Oreo' and Chinese 'Bananas'. The native born children of foreign born immigrants make up "the second generation" of migrants and their children subsequently become "the third generation".

The 'second generation' struggles for identity without falling back on nationality or ascribed ethnicity. Ranjith Guha writes in Migrant Times that establishes a temporal

understanding for the situation of a person in a diaspora, or even a person who doesn't participate in a diaspora community, but instead chooses assimilation. He does not speak of the second-generation immigrant, about the children of the one's who have left the known and arrived at the new. The Church is the place I think the best for the kids to grow up in the Malayalee community. It's the only way they're going to learn their uniqueness: culture and traditions.

Just as our children know the taste of rice, moruh and meen curry, we should tell them the struggle one under went to reach a country where the Sun Never Sets. With more of Malayalee immigration, the church will continue to thrive.

"Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them."- Deuteronomy 4:9 (NIV)



News

ASMTC Peterborough Church Dedication & History

The LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything. Deuteronomy. 2:7

The history of Mar Thoma Church goes back to AD 52 which originated from the missionary activities of St. Thomas the Apostle in Malankara (historical name of modern Kerala). The Church in Malankara flourished under various ecclesiastical faith streams from time to time. The Malankara Church witnessed a Reformation movement during the nineteenth century, inspired by contact with Anglican missionaries from Britain. In United Kingdom the origin and establishment of the Mar Thoma church dates back to 1930 and further on during the 1970's with many Marthomite's migrated from Malayasia, Singapore, East Africa and India which gave new dimension to the existing worship in United Kingdom.

All Saints Mar Thoma Church Peterborough born with a humble origin. During 2005-2008, our Lord placed a desire in the heart of around 10 Mar Thoma families in Peterborough to gather together as a prayer group of St. John's Mar Thoma church, Hounslow. That was the beginning of the Mar Thoma Community in Peterborough. They gathered once in a month for Holy Qurbana and worshipped God at the St. Luke church. A caring atmosphere and growing space attracted more families from various parts around the Peterborough area. Serving together created a deep sense of

community. New Mar Thoma families started moving into Peterborough including members from St James Mar Thoma church, London and found that the prayer group were sufficient for them to worship. In 2010-2012, a bunch of other Mar Thoma families from Belfast migrated to Peterborough and united with the community. With increased growing needs of space, the prayer group moved from St. Luke Church to St. Jude Church for bi-weekly gatherings. In 2013, we became an official Congregation and in January 2014 we emerged as a Parish of the Mar Thoma Church and the All Saints Mar Thoma Church Peterborough was born.

Sunday school classes were crowded, with over fifty enrolled students in the beginning and attracted more children from sister churches. All organisations became very active including Sevika sangham, Edavaka Mission, Yuvajana Sakhyam and the Choir. The church became an active part of the community, most remarkably the youths. Now we are 72 families from Peterborough and the cities around. The growing numbers made the church well-wishers to think about a permanent building. That resulted in leasing this building for 25 years. Church always builds a large tent and a bridge to the community around. We knew that building is just a tool and we will never forget that main purpose of each one of us here is building people - introducing them to Christ and his purpose for their lives.

"Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them." Deuteronomy 4:9.

There is a new generation rising at All Saints Mar Thoma Church a generation who doesn't believe in limits, and who believes all things are possible. All Saints Mar Thoma church wants to give the community around it a message of hope, healing and forgiveness. A message that we can live the abundant life God is calling us. A message that we can discover and finding the evangelist in each one of us.

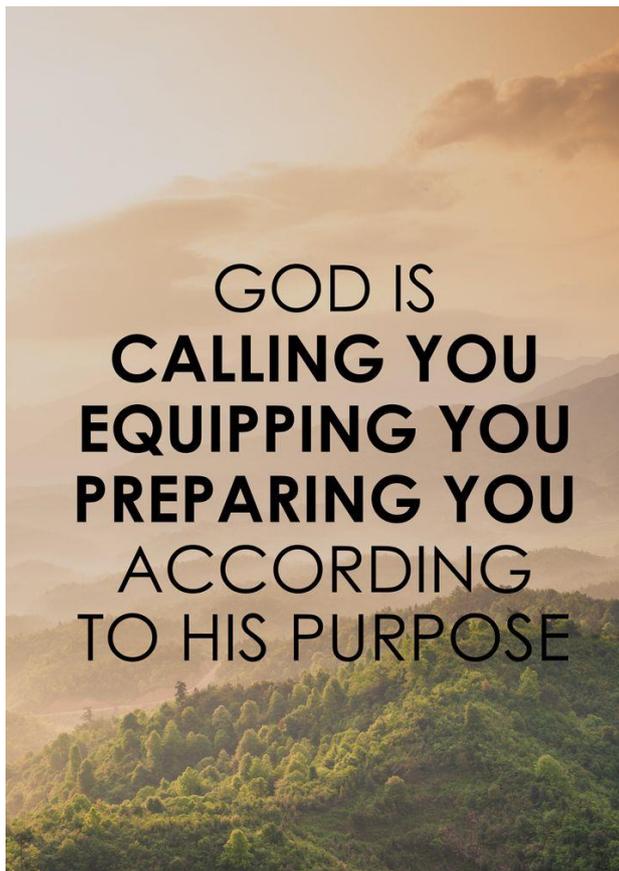


Photo Gallery

Ecumenical Carol





**All Saints Mar Thoma Church
Dedication**



First holy Communion St.Johns



