

Mahragan El-Keraza 2021



**English Edition
Middle School**



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“ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect ” (Matt 24:44)

Be Ready

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Be Ready

" Therefore you also BE READY, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect " (Matt 24:44)

Be Ready...

Introduction

My beloved, we will take you on a short and quick journey to learn about El-Keraza's message this year: "**Be Ready.**" Our goal is to be ready to meet our Divine Groom and dwell with Him in His eternal happiness, where the angels, archangels and saints reside with God according to their good works since the days of Adam to our present day. Therefore, all the lessons for this year revolve around paying attention to our lives, the lives of those around us who seek salvation, and getting ready for eternal life with the Lord Jesus Christ.

To achieve this, we need the work of Divine Grace in our lives. We need to supplement this with a life of repentance, daily striving to be better. So how is this achieved?

- ✦ The Book of *Judges* talks about periods of fluctuations in the life of the people of Israel. Periods of falling and repenting. At times they fell into many sins and idol worship, and thus were conquered by their enemies who subdued them. Downtrodden, they called on God, Who, in response to their prayers would raise them from their low moments. When they lived with God, according to His commandments, they became victorious over their enemies - only to return back to their old idle habits.
- ✦ To ensure that we sustain our lives of repentance, always walking with the Lord, we need to read His Book and know His Word. This will help us to always keep our lives in check.

Be Ready



- ✦ To always be armed with the Words of the Lord in our spiritual warfare, we will study Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians -- it will teach us how to be united with the Lord through the Eucharist and how to sanctify ourselves with the church readings.

In the end, we will reach eternal happiness and inherit eternal life with our Lord Jesus Christ and all His Holy saints.

"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Mat 24:44).

True Facts

We all believe that:

- ✦ God is real. He created this universe, and is the reason for our existence, salvation, and eternal life.
- ✦ God created Adam and Eve from the dust of the earth: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen 2)
- ✦ "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed" (Gen 2:8).
- ✦ "And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food" (Gen 2:9).
- ✦ "The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen 2:9).
- ✦ "Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden" (Gen 2:10).
- ✦ "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to Adam" (Gen 2:21-22).



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- ✦ "And Adam said: 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man' (Gen 2:23).
- ✦ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24).

"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen 2:25).

What did God do with Adam and Eve following their fall?

Our new nature after we fell:

1. Our first parents fell when the serpent tricked Eve by saying: "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5).
2. "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (Gen 3:6).
3. "And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden" (Gen 3:8).
4. "Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9).
5. "So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Gen 3:10).
6. "And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" (Gen 3:11).
7. "Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate" (Gen 3:12).
8. "So the Lord God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life (Gen 3:14).



9. "To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16).

With the Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus

He was able to tread upon serpents and scorpions hence:

1. His creation was restored.
2. The impact of our fall was reversed
3. The promise of salvation was fulfilled.
4. This is what was achieved when Jesus: became Man, was crucified, died for us, resurrected and raised into the heavens.
5. He sent us His Holy Spirit and set in place his Holy church to be our means for salvation and survival.
6. He promised to Come Again, "where He would come in all His Glory and Reward everyone according to their deeds" (divine liturgy).
7. We all say in one voice: "according to your Mercy O God, and not according to our sins."
8. Through our faith, repentance, spiritual guidance, and the Holy sacraments we are able to "abide in the Lord and He in us, so we can have eternal life."





Be Ready

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That is why the sons and daughters of the Church are concerned to receive the Holy Body and the Precious Blood of the Lord since the day of their baptism (as receiving communion should never be postponed unless under severe circumstances after consultation with our spiritual father). This is how we stay firm in the Lord and He resides within us: ***"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him"*** (John 6:56).

Getting Ready for the Second Coming

The church teaches us the importance of being READY to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord, ***"Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:27).***

Ways to be prepared:

1. Be Ready Through Faith

"Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24).

In the Old Testament, when God asked Moses what His Name is, "And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14). In Greek, it is ***EGO EMI***, which means I am the origin of existence.

Therefore, we believe in One God, the creator of heaven and the earth, and believe in His promises. We believe that the promises He gave us in the Old Testament were fulfilled in the New Testament. We believe in His salvation, resurrection, rising into the heavens, and His Second Coming, and the age to come. These are all recurrent themes in our liturgical prayers to seal our belief that He is the God of the Two Testaments - the Old and the New. "And that the Old Testament is revealed in the New, and the New Testament is hidden in the



Old,” as the Fathers of the Church taught us.

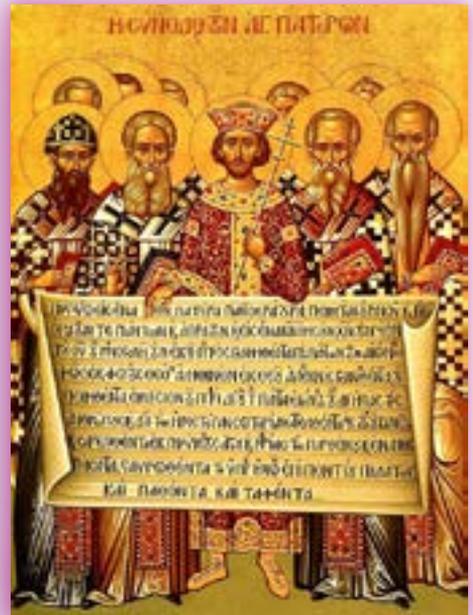
That is why we believe that the two Testaments are One and that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16), “but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

Here we need to confront some of the modern-day claims that seek to discredit some books of the Old Testament and ignore that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16).

2. *Be Ready through Sound Doctrine*

We learn in our Church the importance of:

- ✦ Understanding the Coptic Orthodox Creed and keeping it untainted by new heresies.
- ✦ Provide an explanation for the Christian dogma in an engaging manner that appeals to people of all ages and backgrounds. This allows them to take heed to any sectarian heresies that aim to tamper with our Coptic Orthodox Faith. Therefore, we must:
- ✦ Learn about the Holy Trinity, know the differences between the various sects, and fully grasp Christian Unity and the role of the Council of Nicaea in formulating the Christian creed. This will all be studied throughout our Keraza journey this year.



Our Coptic Orthodox Doctrine is:

1. **A Sound Doctrine:** meaning that it goes hand in hand with the teachings of the Holy Bible and the Coptic Orthodox Church traditions. Our church takes pride, through the grace of God, to have presented to Christianity many theologians who helped present the Christian faith and sound doctrine and formulated the Christian Creed in a detailed manner, to which many attest till our present day. For our Coptic Orthodox Church presents the most meticulous teachings in the world.
2. **A Straight Doctrine:** meaning that it has never deviated from the path pursued by the Holy Apostles, from the beginning of time till our current days. We have never deviated to the left or the right as many other churches have.
3. **A Complete Doctrine:** meaning that it does not show bias to one aspect verses another. For it equally emphasizes the need for both Faith and Works. It honors our Virgin St. Mary without elevating Her reverence to the divinity of the Lord. It allows everyone to read the Holy Bible and meditate on the Word without granting them the liberty to freely interpret the Word.
4. **A Biblical Doctrine:** Although the Coptic Church is a traditional church that believes in the importance of the ecclesiastical tradition and that the Book itself is the gift of tradition and part of it, it believes that the Holy Bible is the measure of every creed, tradition, and ritual. Thus, all the doctrines of our Church are biblical ...It bears hundreds of verses on intercession and on the sacraments, on the purification of the Virgin and the anointing of the sick with holy oil, the priesthood, the altar, etc.

There is no doubt that the doctrine of the Coptic Orthodox Church provides a sound understanding of the Book of Life and the heritage that we've received from our fathers without anything added or removed. We study their lives and their words and their interpretation of the Holy Bible for they pursued a life of Christian faith, and we strive to continue in the same way: "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith fol-

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low, considering the outcome of their conduct" (Hebrews 13:7).

Thus, as we lay our roots in the depth of history, our understanding and behavior glorifies the Name of the Lord and of the kingdom of God, bringing forth fruit: 'some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty' (Matthew 13:23).

3. Be Prepared Spiritually

The spirit is the element placed by God in man through which man communicates with God, understands faith, and the world of the soul. Therefore, the Church is careful that her children are in constant contact and fulfillment through: (prayer - fasting - the Holy Bible - the Eucharist - spiritual readings - spiritual meetings - service - daily praise ... etc.). And prepares them for the life of sacrifice, the possibility of trials, and suffering for Christ our Lord, and the Holy Church.

4. Be Ready for Church

Meaning to be committed to ecclesial life on all levels: personal, family, church, and Coptic identity .. It is important that both the child and the young man learn about the history of our glorious Church and its Holy Fathers, the keepers of the faith such as: (Pope Athanasius the Apostolic - Pope Cyril the Great - Pope Dioscorus) and what they wrote and recorded with their lives.

The rituals in the Church are the vessels of faith, not only in terms of the educational content offered to us by the Church in every tradition, but they also offer emotional, & spiritual guidance of our lives. For our ecclesiastical membership is a union of the believers on earth with the saints in heaven and the Lord of glory, the Head of the Church and its Heavenly Bridegroom.

5. Be Ready to Serve

We need servants who are firm in the faith, doctrine and live pure daily lives The most important thing to know is that service - although it always involves giving to the other, has a positive impact on the giver, "the generous soul will be made rich,

And he who waters will also be watered himself" (Prov. 11:25).

There are many methods of service as prescribed by the Lord

Jesus, and the Holy Bible, such as: (service of education - service of outreach- service of prayer - services of love... etc.).

A man who does not given is like a stagnant well, whose water is not replenished, and soon becomes ruined.

Therefore, we must serve with all our energy to glorify the Lord and His kingdom and to grow in our personal lives.



6. Be Ready for Eternal Life

Our daily goal is: 'We await the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come.'

Our daily quest will end at one point, the point of harvest, when the Lord Jesus comes again, in a more evident way, where He "comes with the clouds, and every eye will see him" (Revelation 1:7). This is in contrast to His first coming, when He was born from the Virgin Mary in a modest manger to fulfil



the salvation. Because “had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Corinthians 2:8).

The Second Coming will be ‘in His glory’ (Matthew 25:31) and in a visible way ‘the brightness of His coming’ (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

If the goal of the First Coming is salvation, then the goal of the Second Coming will be judgment.

It is our responsibility to remain alert awaiting the Second Coming of the Lord and ready for the end of the world.

Finally, we come to:

7. Be Ready in Your Daily Life

We constantly question if things are right or wrong.

Here we draw upon the principles taught by the Apostles when dealing with everyday life:

1. “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful” (1 Cor 6:12).
2. “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify” (1 Cor 10:23).

These are the three questions I should ask myself before every decision I make:

1. Is it appropriate for me as the son/daughter of God?
2. Is it constructive to my life, my family, church, and country?
3. Is taking this decision going to make me a humiliated slave to things such as smoking, drugs and lustful deeds?!

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Thus, I should always remember to make the best decision that will benefit myself, my church, and my country.

Thus, my decision for every behavior involves and revolves around not only myself, but also my family, my church and my country; taking into account the negative impacts of social media and various addictions: drugs, media, mobile, and lustful deeds.

The prayers of our beloved Holy Father Tawadros II
And Church Fathers, servants and people of the Holy church be with us all.
Amen.

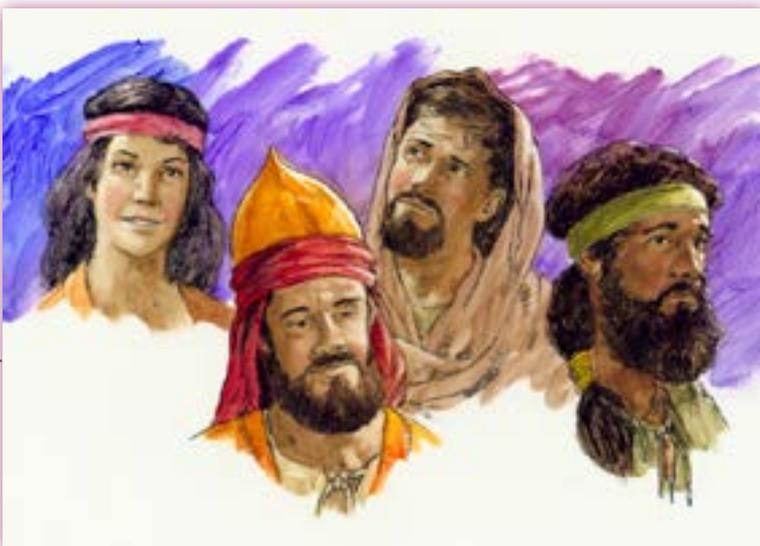




Turn and Come Back Quickly The Book of Judges (1-8)

One day, our friend, Mark, was sitting by himself and thinking: "I fall into sin so many times, then I run to my father of confession, so I can repent and confess...and before I know it, I fall back into the same sin again!! I want a new way of life; I want to learn to constantly be on guard whenever I'm faced with temptation; I want to be ready for the Lord Jesus's return...But how and when will this happen if I feel trapped by my sinful habits?"

Following his daily routine, Mark was reading the Holy Bible one day, and it happened that the Bible reading that day was from the Book of Judges. Mark was surprised when he found out that the idea of falling into and then rising up from sin was the state of the people of Israel in the Book of Judges. He found out that the people used to kneel and beseech God for forgiveness, and then God would raise up for them a judge, who would guide and teach them. For a while, the people would live a life of repentance and peace. Soon, however, they would fall into sin once more...and so on...



Mark realized that the issue that was bothering him the entire week was faced by our forefathers in the Old Testament as well...The more he read in the Book of Judges, the more he realized that a life of readiness means that he should always be in a state of repentance and that he seeks guidance from his father of confession. Mark then decided to study the Book of Judges to see what the people of Israel used to do after falling into sin and then returning back to God...let's learn about Israel's story in the Book of Judges together.

Introduction: God Disciplines and Saves

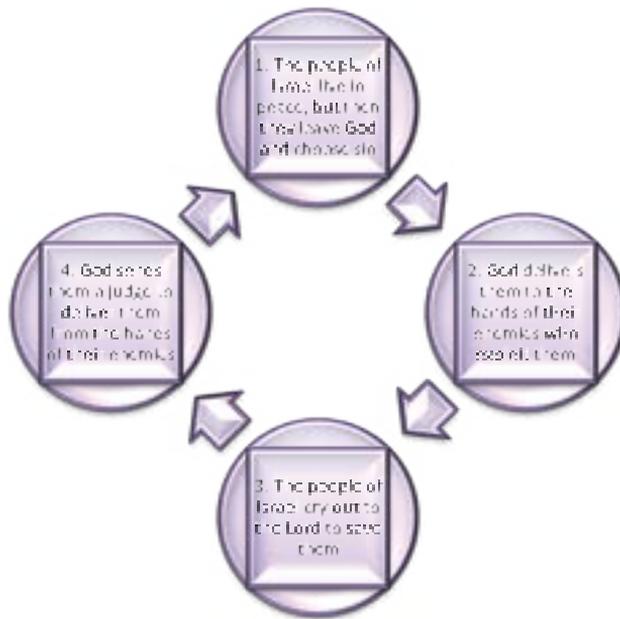
1. The Book of Judges was given its name because it includes the works of the judges who led and judged the people of Israel. The word for "judge" in the Hebrew language means chief or leader, who fights for the people to save them from their enemies. The judge was also the one who would help the people return in repentance from the worship of idols to God. The book covers a period of 450 years and it starts after the death of Joshua and ends at the death of Samuel the prophet, the author of the Book of Judges according to the Hebrew records.
2. 14 judges were mentioned in the Holy Bible, 12 of which were mentioned in the Book of Judges. At that time, the judge was perceived as the savior who would rescue the people from their enemies. That's why the characters of those judges pointed to the true and ultimate Judge, Jesus the Son of God.
3. The judges had power and authority, but they were not like the kings as God was the unseen king of the people and He sent His messages through the high priest. Each tribe would follow the guidance of its high priest. The role of the judge was to lead the people in political affairs including wars against their enemies. Occasionally, he would also help resolve any issues that arose amongst the people themselves.
4. The Book of Judges presents three topics:
 - a. **The state of the people after the death of Joshua (Chapters 1-5)**
 - b. **The rule of the judges (Chapters 3-16)**
 - c. **Two occurrences at the time of the judges (Chapters 17-21)**

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We will focus in our study for the competition this year on the first topic and a special period during the rule of the judges.

The Book of Judges comes after the Book of Joshua in the Holy Bible. It recounts the time after the people of Israel took hold of the Promised Land, in which they did not completely drive out the foreign people who had different, ungodly customs and thus the people of Israel lived amongst the foreigners. The result was that the people of Israel deviated away from God and followed



the idols of the foreign people and became defiled by their worship. Thus, they ignored God’s commandments until the end of the life of Samuel the prophet.

5. The Book of Judges explains the repetitive deviation of the people of Israel from God’s path: every time they deviated and followed the worship of idols (1) God allowed them to fall into tribulations under the hands of their enemies, (2) so they cried out to the Lord, (3) then God sent them a judge to

deliver them from the hands of their enemies and guide them into repentance to follow God's path once more (4).

The Lord Jesus in the Book of Judges:

Although the book of Judges represents an era in which the people of Israel enjoyed the fulfillment of God's promises, but then suffered for their later deviation from God's path, God did not abandon His people as He used to send them a judge and a savior, who could encourage and guide them unto a life of repentance to deliver them from their enemies, whom God allowed to have some victory over Israel so that His people would be disciplined. In fact, their own sins and evil habits were the ones which led them to feel the sharp, bitter aftertaste of sin.

That's why we should be on guard or else we might lose our heavenly treasure. So, we shall be made ready for that day through sincere repentance.

Chapter One:

Main Ideas:

1. The fall of Adoni-Bezek
2. The taking of Jerusalem & other cities
3. The taking of the House of Bethel
4. Leniency toward the foreign people

Ask yourself: Which stage are you at right now...? Is it the stage of deviation or the stage of returning?

The Meaning of Words Used in the Chapter:

Perizzites: The inhabitants of the village who lived in Canaan before the arrival of the Israelites; the meaning of their name is "rural people"

Be Ready



1. God promised to give Canaan (Palestine) to His people, the Israelites. The people lived with the hope that this promise would be fulfilled. Then, Joshua came and God used him to lead the people through the Jordan river and to help them possess and divide the land of Canaan amongst themselves. Joshua died after dividing the land amongst the different tribes of Israel, but some of the pagan tribes remained although God commanded their dismissal.
2. Therefore, it was necessary for the Israelites to fight these peoples and to expel them to inherit the Promised Land. So that these pagan peoples did not attract the people of God to pagan worship, they asked the Lord, 'Who among us will go up to the Canaanites first to fight them?' (Ch 1).
3. The LORD chose the tribe of Judah to lead the people in the war against the Canaanites, and Judah asked his brother Simeon (meaning the listener) to go up with him.
4. The tribes of Judah, Simeon fought & prevailed against the warrior 'Adoni Bezek,' who had humiliated 70 kings, cut off their thumbs and big toes and brought them to gather the crumbs that fell under his table, and they grabbed him, and cut off his thumbs and big toes, and brought him to Jerusalem. This was the old way of treating the enemies, so that they would not be able to hold the weapons of war later on. Adoni-Bezek realized that God is just in that He punished him for his evil deeds with the same punishment he inflicted on the 70 kings, as is written, "as I have done, so God has repaid me" (Judges 1:7).
5. Adoni meaning '*master*', and the meaning of "Bezek" "flash of lightning" symbolizes Satan, who attracts people with glamorous and attractive sins, cutting off their means of fighting back by isolating them from the Church community. So we must never let our guard down, we must always be ready and armed to fight Satan.
6. Joseph (symbol of Christ) came after Judah, and ascended "to Bethel and the Lord with them" (Judges 1:22), and Bethel, which means 'the house of God', indicates that we cannot enter the house of God except through God

Himself who reveals His mysteries to us. The Israelites did not expel the foreign people from the land they claimed as the Lord had commanded them before they crossed the Jordan River. Instead, many of the tribes reconciled with these peoples and left them to dwell in their midst (Judges 1:21,27-33). The reason God commanded the exile of the foreign people away from the children of Israel was to prevent the children of Israel from learning from the foreign people idolatry and evil practices; they are a symbol of sin that must be totally expelled from our lives, so as not to depart from God. So we do not allow or tolerate any thought or belief alien to the faith and doctrine of our Coptic Orthodox Church, lest as time passes, it leaks into us until it reaches a point that we would be unable to expel it.

What do we learn from this chapter?

Cut off all links to bad friendships, so they do not become a temptation to disobey the commandments of God, and lose your eternity.

The grace of God always works with me in my struggle against sin (Judah and Simeon)

Chapter Two:

Main Ideas:

1. The angel of the Lord appears in Bochim.
2. The death of Joshua.
3. The deviation of the people, they followed Baal and Ashtoreths
4. The establishment of judges.



The Meaning of Words Used in Chapter 2:

1. The angel of the Lord came from 'Gilgal' (where the Lord freed the people from the shame of slavery), to 'Bochim' (where the people raised their voice crying to the Lord). The angel began to travel triumphing over Adoni Bezek to give the spirit of hope, and now he speaks to us about tears and repentance, to show us that it is not enough for our spiritual life to claim that we gained victory over Satan, but we must continue to persevere in the life of repentance.
2. In the Old Testament, he led the people to Gilgal where there was victory, and then ascended to Bochim, because he is the only giver and receiver of repentance.
3. The angel of the Lord summed up the sins of the people: they ignored the Divine covenant and established a covenant with the inhabitants of the earth, i.e. with sin. When the people heard these words, they raised their voices in tears.
4. God's wrath refers to the fall of the people under His Divine justice, but God in His love would accept His children when they return to Him by repentance.

Deviation from God darkens the soul with lusts, and vain glory,

It does not allow the soul to hear the commandments of the Bible and the words of the testifying saints

What Do We Learn in this Chapter?

1. God remains faithful always in His covenants with us even with the lack of man's honesty, and this gives us hope that He accepts our repentance, whatever our sins may be.
2. Our repentance must be genuine, from the whole heart, not just due to temporary emotions.

Chapter Three

Main Ideas:

1. The deviation of the people and their enslavement to Kushan king of Aram Nahrin.
2. - the first judge Othniel Ben Kanaz.
3. The second judge, Ehud Ben Gira.
4. The third judge Shamgar bin Anath

The Meaning of Words Used in the Chapter:

This chapter begins with the remembrance of the fact that Israel did not expel foreign nations. God allowed these nations to remain as a tool to train subsequent generations on war. As they gained experience by fighting these nations, they would experience the life of victory against their enemies and be trained by it.

Because of these nations, the people deviated from the worship of the Lord. The sign of their deviation was that they married pagan people, which led them to idolatry. The worship of idols and the contempt of the commandments of the Lord is the natural fruit of man's acceptance to be attached to things outside the sphere of faith and the Church.

'Cushan-Rishathaim' meaning 'double evil.' The people of God, who committed a double sin (marriage to pagan people and the worship of idols), God delivered them to the evil ones who humiliated them. And when they cried out to the LORD, Othniel the son of Kenaz sent unto them to save them, and the meaning of his name was 'the response of God or the power of God', and the secret of his power, was "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him' (Judges 3:10).



He was the first judge of the people of the tribe of Judah, and he refers to the true Savior, Jesus Christ; so the land rested 40 years. Then the people deviated again from God. And the LORD delivered them to Eglon king of Moab, and the meaning of his name was 'fat calf' a sign of his brutal strength, this enemy made an alliance with the sons of

Ammon and Amalek and took over the city of pine trees (Jericho).

The people cried out to Yahweh, and He sent them Ehud the son of Gera, a judge and a savior. He was the second judge of the people of Israel from the tribe of Benjamin, a man of Assyria. He was able to kill the king of Moab in his room. And the sons of Israel went down with him, and they killed about 10 thousand men from Moab, and the land rested for 80 years.

5 - 'Shamgar son of Anath,' the third judge of the children of Israel, it seems that

Shamgar did not find a war weapon, and he used the an ox goad to beat the Palestinians, but God, who does great things using little things, saved Israel with this judge.

What do we learn from this chapter?

- ✦ According to the commandment we must love all people, believers and unbelievers, but this does not mean that we should keep any company or association (with marriage) with non-believers. And our teacher Paul the Apostle warns us, saying, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." (2 Cor. 6:14), ie, associate with them in marriage, this association is outside the circle of the Church, leads to denial of faith, & denial of eternal inheritance.
- ✦ Whatever my talents and simple energies, the Lord is able to use them in great work.

Chapter Four

Main Ideas:

1. The fall of Israel into evil.
2. Deborah encourages Barak to fight.
3. The destruction of Sisera and his army.

The Meaning of Words Used in the Chapter:

1. Israel did evil again, and the Lord delivered them into the hands of 'Sisera', the chief of the army of Jabin king of Canaan, who oppressed them for 20 years. And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord, who sent them 'Deborah' the prophetess and fourth judge. The meaning of her name is 'bee' and she was the wife of 'Lapidoth' and God sent her to help Israel escape from the hand of Sisera.

2. God chose Deborah for this tough job so that His Name would be glorified in her weakness, and to clarify that women have just an important a role as men. And Deborah was also a prophetess and a judge, who ruled the people according to the law.

3. Deborah hastened to remind Barak of God's commandment to take 10 thousand men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun and go up to fight Sisera. Barak refused to go to war without her.





Barak's reaction was based on his full confidence in her high spirituality as a prophetess, the wisdom with which God blessed her, the love of the people for her, and his trust in her. Deborah went up with him after she encouraged him with strong words: 'Arise, for this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the Lord gone out before you?' (Judges 4:14).

4. God completed his promise, and disturbed the army of Sisera and his vehicles in front of Barak. Sisera fled on foot, came to the tent of a woman named: 'Jael' and hid there, and then Jael killed him with the tent peg as he was fast asleep after drinking the milk he asked for. Then she went outside the tent to announce the news of Sisera's death to Barak, who was pursuing him, and she invited him into the tent to see Sisera dead in her tent with his temple fixed to the ground with the tent peg. And thus, Deborah's prophecy was fulfilled: 'For the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman' (Judges 4: 9).



What do we learn from this chapter?

- ✦ To have friends from the children of God, to win through them a blessing for our lives.

- ✦ To collaborate so that a task is completed successfully, as we are members of the one body, the body of Christ, and every member of us has his role, as exemplified in the cooperation between Barak and Deborah.
- ✦ To have full trust in God's time, He fights for his children in their war against the devil, just as He subdued Sisera in front of Barak.

Chapter Five

Main Ideas:

1. God is the leader of His people.
2. Battle of Deborah and Barak.
3. Defeat of Sisera

The Meaning of Words Used in the Chapter:

Deborah's song is called 'the song of victory', which Deborah wrote herself, in poetic style filled with rhetoric. This is also the song of the human warrior who perseveres during his spiritual struggle.

Deborah sang this song when the Lord saved his people from Sisera, Therefore, it is a praise to God in the time of joy for his great works, for regardless of the deeds that were done by Barak and Debora, God is the guardian of victory.

As Deborah blessed the Lord at the beginning of the song, her song also concludes with praise of the Lord for His works.

What do we learn from this chapter?

Praising and thanking God always in all circumstances.



Chapter Six

Main Ideas:

1. Humiliation of the Midian people.
2. The appearance of the angel of the Lord to Gideon.
3. Gideon will destroy the altar of Baal.
4. Gideon asks for a sign from the Lord.

The Meaning of Words Used in the Chapter:

1. The children of Israel rested, and they forgot the Lord and did evil once more. The Lord delivered them to Midian, who afflicted them for seven years, and Israel cried out to the Lord. He sent them a prophet to help them see their sins and transgressions.
2. Gideon, whose name means wrestler, was the son of Joash the Abiezrite from the tribe of Manasseh, and lived in the village of Ophrah west of Jordan. Gideon was beating the ears of wheat with a stick when the angel of the Lord came and sat in front of him. The angel of the Lord was one of the apparitions of the Son of God in the Old Testament, and this is clear from His words to Gideon: 'Have I not sent you?' (Judges 6:14), "The Lord is with you" (Judges 6:12), the greeting of the angel bears the power of the Lord Jesus Christ (the Almighty), the Word of God who raises us from the dead.
3. Gideon inquired: If God was with them, why did Midian reign over and humiliate them? At this point, the Lord sent Gideon to save the people. And Gideon was the fifth judge in the series of judges. Gideon was humble before God's call to him, but God assured him that he would be with him and would strike Midian as one man.

Be Ready

" Therefore you also BE READY, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect " (Matt 24:44)

4. Gideon asked for a sign to make sure that the One who spoke to him was the Lord, perhaps because he could not believe himself to have received such a message. Gideon offered a gift to the Angel, which was goat meat, broth, and unleavened bread. The Angel asked him to put the meat and the bread on a rock, And the Angel stretched out the tip of his rod with his hand, and the fire went up from the rock, and the offering was taken. Then the Angel disappeared, and thus the LORD announced the acceptance of the offering of Gideon.

5. Gideon realized that he saw the Lord face to face, and thought that he would not live as the Lord told Moses: 'You cannot see my face, because man does not see me and live' (Exodus 33:20). But the Lord reassured him and said to him, "Peace be with you; Do not fear. You shall not die" (Judges 6: 23). In the face of this Divine love, Gideon erected an altar to the Lord called 'Jehovah Shallum' meaning 'The-Lord-Is-Peace' because the Lord gave him peace.



6. When the Lord appeared to Gideon in this place, this place became pure, so

7. it was not right for Baal to remain in it. Therefore, the LORD asked Gideon to destroy the altar of Baal, which his father had erected, and cut off the ark, and then he built an altar to the Lord, and sacrificed the bull of seven years old. This bull is a symbol of Christ's eternal sacrifice, Whose coming will put an end to all other sacrifices.

8. Gideon took with him ten men for this work, and destroyed the altar at night. These ten are the symbol of the law in God's Ten Commandments. When the people of the city knew what Gideon had done, they asked to



have him killed, but his father defended him. And so Gideon's weak spirit was strengthened and on that day, Gideon was called 'Jerubbaal', meaning 'Let Baal Plead'

9. And the Midianites, the Amalekites, and the sons of the east gathered together to fight against Israel. When Gideon saw that they had gone down to war, he struck the trumpet after he had been strengthened with the Spirit of the Lord. Immediately his whole clan gathered behind him to fight. He turned the rebels into warriors with him. Before he went to war, Gideon asked for a sign from the Lord. He asked him that there might be dew on the fleece, which he placed on the ground, while the earth around it would be dry. Then he asked that the dew be on the whole earth, but that the fleece would remain dry. The dew that first came down on the fleece indicated the faith in Judaism, while the whole world was steeped in idolatry, but after Israel rejected Christ, the fleece became dry, meaning that they became faithless, while the Gentiles entered into faith and enjoyed the Lord Christ as their Savior and life-giver.

What do we learn from this chapter?

- ✦ That whatever our weaknesses may be, God gives us strength to do the work that He asks us to do (with perseverance and grace)
- ✦ To care for the salvation of our souls and those around us



Chapter Seven

Main Ideas:

1. God saves using the weak.
2. God declares victory to Gideon.
3. The defeat of Midian.
4. The princes of the Midianites Oreb and Zeeb killed (meaning crow and wolf).



The Meaning of Words Used in the Chapter:

1. Gideon gathered 32,000 men to fight 135,000 men from the ranks of the enemies, but the Lord saw that this number was large, as the people would think proudly because of their strength and the number of victories over their enemies. So, the Lord commanded Gideon to call in the people so that whoever was afraid of war may him return. And 22,000 men returned home while ten thousand remained, and the Lord saw that this number was still too large. Gideon ordered them to come down to the water to drink, whoever cast his hand against his mouth was chosen to fight in the war. Only 300 men ended up going with Gideon to war.
2. The 'crusaders' of the spiritual struggle followed under the leadership of Gideon the judge, who was a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ of glory. The men carried provisions with their trumpets; the provisions refer to faith and trumpets to the word of God. Some were excluded because they have fallen on their knees to drink, which is considered a type of negligence as



it gave the enemy the opportunity to attack the men from behind; this is unfitting in the life of spiritual struggle.

3. Gideon went to war with a few men, and he knew that he would face the enemy in the plain, where there were no natural fortifications to hide behind, but he went with a heart trusting in God, so the Lord spoke with him to prove his faith, and asked him to come down with 'Purah' his servant. Gideon heard a man telling his friend that he saw in a dream a 'loaf of barley bread' (Judges 7:13), rolling around the Midianite camp, beating the tent and falling. His friend explained to him that this loaf was 'Gideon', which God pushed into his hand. This is a sign that the Lord proclaims to the Midianites that He will destroy them using Gideon, who appears weak and poor as the worthless barley loaf. In times of trouble, not only do believers experience God's work with them, but also enemies witness God's wondrous work with His children.

4. God gave Gideon wisdom and good measure to fight the war with only 300 men, against an army of 135,000 soldiers. Gideon divided his men into three sections. Each section occupied a position on one side of the Midian district. The men came in the second watch of the night. Each one with a trumpet, a jar and a lamp, and the men of Gideon in one fell swoop blew their trumpets and broke the jars, which caused a great bang, terrifying the soldiers of the Midianites. They fought each other with swords, and the Midianites did not know that they were fighting themselves and fled from the camp.

5. Gideon commanded the inhabitants of Mount Ephraim to set out to take over all the streams of water from the Midianite region to the house of Bara to Jordan. The intention of depriving the Midianites of water was to destroy them completely and prevent them from escaping.

6. The men of Ephraim followed the Midianites, and killed their princes, crow and wolf, and brought their heads to Gideon. The crow referred to the wicked spirit that lives off corruption.

7. The wolf refers to the devil, who has the character of ferocity and evil. But when we are associated with Gideon, we can kill every tendency for

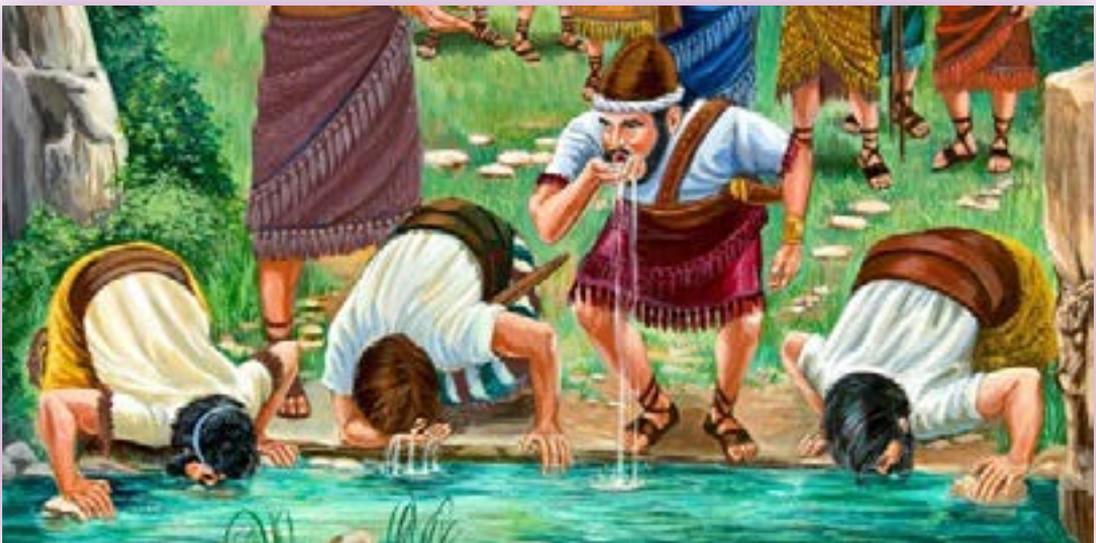
Be Ready

" Therefore you also BE READY, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect " (Matt 24:44)

corruption and fraud.

What do we learn from this chapter?

- ✦ That God uses the little to declare that the virtue of power belongs to God & is not from us.
- ✦ That the slack man cannot win the war against Satan.
- ✦ That the work in one spirit gives victory, three teams working simultaneously and in one spirit.





Chapter Eight

Main Ideas:

1. Gideon will reconcile the men of Ephraim.
2. The position of the people of Succoth and Penuel.
3. The king of Midian was killed.
4. Gideon makes golden earrings.
5. The death of Gideon.

The Meaning of Words Used in the Chapter:

1. The people of Ephraim were angry with Gideon because he did not call them to war first, but Gideon treated the situation with wisdom, humility and good words. Gideon praised them for killing the Midianites, saying that this work was better than what he and his men did. And the men of Ephraim departed from him.
2. Gideon asked the people of 'Succoth' to give bread to his men who exhausted them from the pursuit of Midian, especially since they did not stop, but continued to pursue the kings of Midian 'Zebah' and 'Zalmunna.' But the people of Succoth refused in mockery and tried to frustrate them, forcing Gideon to be firm with them, threatening them to hurt their bodies with the thorns of the earth. Here Gideon appears as a judge of Israel, it is his duty to discipline these people so that the whole people would not become cursed.
3. What the people of Succoth did, also did the people of Penuel; Gideon responded to them that he would destroy their tower.
4. Gideon followed the king of Midian to Karkor, and attacked the remaining army of 15 thousand soldiers, and while the two kings fled, he tracked them down and ultimately captured them (if the enemy (Satan) initially appeared



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strong having 135 thousand soldiers, but those who follow Gideon (Christ) will win victory over the devil). Gideon did not kill Midian immediately, but took them with him to see the people of Succoth and Penuel.

5. Gideon returned to Succoth, and asked a boy about his elders, And he did to them that day what he had already threatened them, so that the people might learn their lesson. And so, the Penuel's tower was destroyed.

6. Gideon asked the kings of Midian about the men whom they killed on Mount Tabor, and when they confessed, he commanded his firstborn son to kill them. But the boy was afraid, so Gideon killed them himself. Then he took the baskets that were hanging from their camels.

7. Gideon rejected the offer presented to him by the people that his sons after him should reign over them, declaring "I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you" (Judges 8: 23). Deep in his heart, Gideon did not desire power, but he was in fact a judge serving the Lord and his people. This is the first time that Israel's attempt to establish the inherited royal system had emerged.

8. Gideon remained faithful to the Lord and died with a good wife, and St. Paul the Apostle considered him a man of faith.

9. The land rested for 40 years in the days of Gideon, and the Midianites were humiliated before him. Gideon took to himself many women and he had 70 sons; he had a son named Abimelech. And after his death the children of Israel returned to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, taking 'Baal' as a god.

What do we learn from this chapter?

- ✦ That our words should be kind (to everyone) and humble, especially in times of anger.
- ✦ Whenever our lives are under the leadership of Jesus (Gideon) we overcome the enemy and his warfare.

Be Ready



Conclusion: As we mentioned that the Book of Judges explains to us the situation of the people of the Israelites when they made mistakes and then returned to God. God would send them a judge as a Savior, and then they would make mistakes again, and so on.. This is the case of all humanity that falls and then gets back up. So, we must always be in repentance and constant readiness, according to the words of the Holy Bible: 'Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect' (Matthew 24:44) ... God will reward us for attempting to fight temptation, even if it takes us our whole lives, rather than if we just give in to it after falling so many times.





Be Ready

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Be Ready to Unite With God

We may wonder sometimes ...

Why do we need to attend the Liturgy? Doesn't the Korban and the Wine become Christ's Body and Blood just before Holy Communion?

So why spend so much time in prayers and readings? ... And why not enter the church at the time of communion only since the purpose of the Liturgy is Holy Communion?

To understand the answers to these questions, let us listen to Uncle Matthew ..

This dialogue is between the servant (Uncle Matthew) and his Sunday school student Mina

Mina: Hello, Uncle Matthew

Uncle Matthew: Hello, Mina.

Mina: I attended the Liturgy today from the beginning of the Offering of Incense and partook the Holy Communion. I also attended Vespers last night and I heard all the readings, but I have some questions ..

Uncle Matthew: Ask, Mina.

Mina: Why do we read so many readings during the Liturgy?

Uncle Matthew: In each Liturgy we read nine sections: A Psalm and the Vespers Gospel, a Psalm and the Matins Gospel, a reading from: one of the Pauline epistles, one of the Catholic epistles, from the Praxis, a Psalm and the Gospel of the Liturgy.

The Church has put forth these readings in the Liturgy from the beginning of the evening prayer to before Holy Communion for several reasons:

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1 - To sanctify our lives: For the Lord of glory, Jesus said, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" (John 15:3).

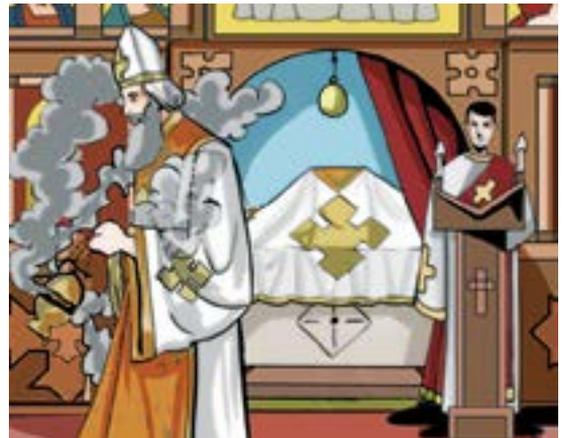
2 - To illuminate our lives: So that as children of God we may know good from bad, and right from wrong. "Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path"
(Psalm 119: 105).

3 - To lead our lives: in our daily behavior, and to live according to the principles followed by the prophet David: "Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You" (Psalm 119: 11).

A large number of selected readings from the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments are integrated into the services and prayers of the Coptic Church throughout the year. We are an Evangelical church that loves the Gospel, is saturated in it, and is imbued with its own Words.

Through these readings, the Church offers us an integrated thought of the love of God and His sacramental work with commitment to faith and repentance, in order for us to be qualified and deserving of His salvation and ready for the happy eternity that awaits us.

Therefore, the ecclesiastical readings are an integral part of worship. They are not chapters that are read only, but are lively practices according to each season (annual, Kiahk, sad days, joyful days, Palm Sunday days, fasting days).



Mina: On what basis were these readings placed?

Uncle Matthew: The readings are divided into:

Special readings of Sundays:

Sundays during the year portray the work of the Holy Trinity as follows:

- ✦ The Church dedicated the readings of the first month of the Coptic Year, Tout, to teach us about 'the love of God the Father'.
- ✦ The readings of the Sundays of the month Babah until the end of the month Bashans (including those for Advent, the Birth of Jesus, and the Feast of the Epiphany) 'To teach us of the grace of the Only Begotten Son of God'.
- ✦ The readings of the month of Paona, the month of descent the Holy Spirit, are dedicated to teaching us about 'the gifts of the Holy Spirit'.
- ✦ The month of Abib, during which we celebrate the Feast of the Apostles, includes readings that focus on the help of the Savior to his holy apostles.
- ✦ Readings of the month of Mesra talk about how of the Savior takes care of His church, and will continue to take care of it until the end of the world.
- ✦ The Sunday of the shortest month speaks of the end of the world, and the signs that precede the Second Coming of Christ, and Judgment Day.

Readings for weekdays:

The church arranged readings of the days according to the readings of the Synaxarium with a common theme connecting them to the readings of the day.

Mina: What is meant by the weekdays and the Synaxarium?

Uncle Matthew: Weekdays are all the days of the week, except Sundays. And Synaxarium is a Greek word meaning 'history and stories of fathers, prophets,



saints, and martyrs’

Mina: Are any of these readings repeated?

Uncle Matthew: There are some basic readings that we must pay attention to, namely:

1. The Church sets for each day of the year, certain chapters that are assigned according to the Synaxarium and the Liturgical Gospel of the day.
2. Daily readings are arranged according to the remembrance of the Feasts of: Virgin Mary, or
3. a saint or a martyr, a patriarch, a monk, or the angel of the day, etc.
4. 3 - If the Synaxarium for a day includes the commemoration of more than one saint, then the church chooses to tell the story of the most prominent saint.
5. 4- Then we follow the principle of borrowing.

Mina: What is the meaning of borrowing?

Uncle Matthew: There are some main readings for the days of the year with a limit of 60, for the rest of the days the readings are borrowed (from the 60 readings). Therefore, a large number of readings repeat over the course of the year.

Mina: Could you, Uncle Matthew, give some examples?

Uncle Matthew: For example:

1. The feasts of the Virgin Mary: the special day is the first of Bashnas, which coincides with the birthday of the Virgin Mary. So, we read the Liturgy Gospel which speaks of the visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary to St. Elizabeth (Luke 1: 39-56).

The same readings are repeated on the other days (borrowed days) that cele-



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brate the Virgin Mary such as:

The 3rd of kiahk; the day she entered the temple, and 21st of Tuba; the commemoration of her departure ... Etc.

2 - The feast of the angels: the special day is 12th of Hatour, which commemorates the feast of the Archangel Michael. On this Day, the Holy Bible speaks of the work of the angels on Judgment Day (Matthew 13: 24-43). The borrowed days are: 12th of Bauonah; the monthly feast of archangel Michael.

3- The feasts of the prophets: The Special Day is 8th of Tout to commemorate the departure of Moses the prophet. The Gospel read on this day is about our Lord's response to the request of the prophets (Matthew 23:14-36).

We recite/borrow the readings of this day for every time day we celebrate the prophets.

4 - The feasts of the monks: The special day is the 22nd of Tuba to commemorate the departure of St. Anthony, the father of the monks.

The Gospel read is about God's promise of the kingdom to His faithful servants. This Gospel reading begins with the verse: "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12: 32-44).

The general theme of the day's readings revolves around 'readiness'.

Mina: Thank you. Now I know why the Church put forth all these readings in the Liturgy, so that we may understand who the Bridegroom is, so that we may hear His words that purify us and make us ready for the Bridegroom's Supper.

5- Celebrations of martyrs and saints: the special day is 30th of Tuba, which is the celebration of the martyrdom of the saints: Pistis, Elpis, Agape and their

Be Ready



mother Sophia. the readings speak to us of the importance of getting ready for eternal life. These readings are recited 23 times a year during the feasts of all the female saints and martyrs. For example:

- ✦ 10th of Tout: Martyrdom of Saint Matrona
- ✦ 29th of Tout: Martyrdom of Saint Aripsima
- ✦ 15th of Baramhat: the departure of St. Sarah the nun
- ✦ 28th Abib: the departure of St. Mary Magdalene .. And so on.

Mina: Thank you Uncle Matthew ... I would like you to further clarify the connection between the daily readings and the Synaxarium

Uncle Matthew: As mentioned, the nine readings are connected by one common theme.

For example, 30th of Tuba commemorates Wise Virgins who were ready to meet the Heavenly Bridegroom. The readings are as follows:

1 - Psalm of Vespers: "The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after. Among them were the maidens playing timbrels" (Psalm 68: 25-).

2 - The Gospel of Vespers: (the sacrifice of love): "a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table" (Mt 26:7).

3 - Psalm of Matins: 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, Because of Your enemies, That You may silence the enemy and the avenger' (Psalm 8:2).

4- The Gospel Matins: (The Samaritan woman): "The woman said to

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" Therefore you also BE READY, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect " (Matt 24:44)

Him, 'Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw" (John 4:15-24).

5- Pauline Epistle: We find that Saint Paul lays down the road of spiritual struggle for us

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 5: 8-21).



6- Catholic Epistles:"

For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" (1 Peter 3:5-14). Our true Bridegroom is Jesus; how beautiful it is to submit to Him and to readily follow all His commandments

7- Praxis: We are given the example of St. Philip's daughters, who were saints "So they entered Philip's house, for he was one of the seven, and they stayed with him...and he had four virgin girls and they used to prophecy (that is, pray, praise, and preach). How beautiful it is to preach God's Name; to be witnesses to Him everywhere through our actions!

8- Psalm of the Liturgy: "She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors;The virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You" (Psalms 45:14).



9- Gospel of the Liturgy: (the parable of the virgins): "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom..." (Matthew 25:1-13).

We notice that these readings talk about the same type of people who are working hard to prepare themselves for eternal life, and we notice the gradual steps to achieve this goal: the sinful woman offers repentance pouring costly oil on the feet of Jesus as a sign of love (the stage of repentance), then the Samaritan asks for the living water and preaches the Savior (the stage of perfusion and satiety), then five wise virgins are shown to be ready with the oil, which represents acts of kindness and mercy, and they enter into God's kingdom with joy and praise (the stage of union).

An important note: the parable of the virgins is repeated daily in the Midnight Prayer (first service) to encourage us to be vigilant and ready every day to meet the Heavenly Bridegroom. It is also repeated annually in the readings of the afternoon of the Holy Pascha.

Uncle Matthew: Someone was preparing to travel abroad, after arriving at the airport, he was surprised to find out that his passport had expired. Of course, he had to return and miss his trip. He lost the price he had paid for the ticket, and all other expenses relating to the trip!!!

Have you ever experienced this feeling - to forget something essential for your travels and then to realize it midway? It's an awful feeling!!

Mina: Yes, it is a very difficult feeling, especially since it is difficult to go back to fetch what you are missing.

Uncle Matthew: So, we must prepare; we must buy the oil now like the wise virgins.

Mina: Very true ... How can we have that oil in our containers?

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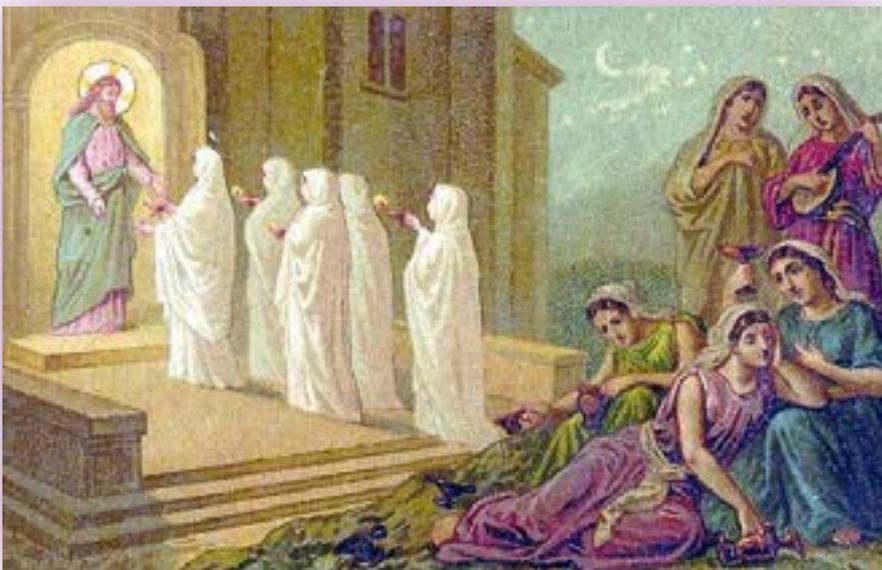
Uncle Matthew: Oil is all spiritual struggle. It is good deeds, acts of love, virtues, and following the commandments.

Mina: We must be ready, like the wise virgins, always carrying the light.

Uncle Matthew: What is the difference between wise and the foolish virgins?

Points of comparison	Wise virgins	Ignorant virgins
Number	5	5
Status	virgins	virgins
Oil in the lamps	yes	yes
Awaiting the Groom	yes	yes
Fell asleep	yes	yes
When the Groom arrived	were raised	were raised
Oil in their containers	yes	no
Ready to meet the Groom	ready	not ready

Since Mahragan's theme verse this year revolves around: "Be Prepared" we must focus on the wise virgins who teach us a lesson about vigilance and preparation.





St. Paul's Conversion

Be Ready and Carry the Whole Armor of God

The Epistle of our teacher St. Paul to the Ephesians

Introduction:

My beloved boys and girls of Junior High School. As we embark on the journey of Mahragan El Keraza this year with the slogan "Be Ready". We cannot be fully ready to meet the Lord unless we are steadfast in Him. And a true example of spiritual steadfastness is St Paul the Apostle who faced a lot of hardships but was not shaky in his faith, as he said in his Epistle to the Corinthians: "From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?" (2 Corinthians 11:24-29)

We study together an epistle for this great apostle who travelled the world preaching the Name of Christ enduring pain and suffering as commanded: "Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you." (1



Peter 3:15) He wrote an epistle to the Ephesians which was directed to the churches of Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey).

In the first three chapters of the epistle, St. Paul the Apostle reminds us that we've been on God's mind even before the foundation of the world. And He chose us in Christ so that we may all be unified in Him. As a result, we became parts of the body of Christ which is the Church and He is the Head of the Church.

In the last three chapters of the epistle, he teaches us how to act and behave like Christians fit to be called sons of God.

At the end of the epistle he teaches us how to be armed and ready to face our spiritual battles, being aware and vigilant so we can reach eternal joy and the communion of the eternal inheritance with Christ.

The City of Ephesus

Ephesus is a city in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) that was famous for its temple of the Greek Goddess Artemis. The city enjoyed clean air and good weather and its people were known for their richness and their love for arts. The city celebrated lots of festivities and it was one the most famous and beautiful cities in the world because of the temple. It took 200 years to build the temple (which was burned down but rebuilt again). At the end it was destroyed by a great earthquake.



From here came the vision of St. Paul the Apostle for the city to be the center for spreading the Gospel. And as such, the city became a place that had a powerful spiritual effect. He passed by the city on his way to Corinth in the year 54 A.D. (Acts 18:19). In Corinth, he entered the synagogue and preached to the Jews but not to the gentiles and he left Aquila and Priscilla there (Acts 18:26). He then went back to Ephesus to start the church of Ephesus (Acts 19:1) and stayed there for 3 years (which is a long time compared to the time he stayed in other places).

Among the things that St. Paul did in Ephesus include:

- ✦ Preached the Gospel of salvation to the disciples of St. John the Baptist. St. Paul baptized them, laid his hands on them, thus they received the Holy Spirit.
- ✦ Debated with the Jews for three months regarding the Kingdom of God
- ✦ Met with his disciples for the last time and gave them recommendations regarding service (Acts 20:22-36)

Ephesus was also one the seven churches that St. John the beloved wrote to in the Book of Revelation (Rev 2: 1-7) and in which St. Timothy served (1 Tim 1:3).



Time and Place of Writing:

The Epistle was written between the years 62-63 A.D, while St. Paul was imprisoned in Rome, where he also wrote the epistles to the Colossians, Philippians and Philemon. These are called the epistles of captivity.

The Body of the Epistle:

The Epistle mainly talks about a fact that was never revealed before which became known now. That is that the believers from the Jews and the gentiles are now one in Christ. And that they are parts of the whole body of Christ and are partners in the eternal joy and inheritance.

The Epistle's main point is that the Church is the body of Christ. It is a continuation to the Epistle to Colossae which emphasizes the fact that Christ is the Head of the Church. That's why the Apostle requested that they both be read together especially as his disciple Tychicus carried both of them together while traveling.



Chapter One: Christ blesses and fills His Church

St. Paul the Apostle starts with greeting the people and goes on to an educational sermon that sounds like a beautiful praise in which he offers thanks to God and counts the blessings that Christ has bestowed upon us. The phrase “In Christ” was repeated 20 times in the Epistle, to emphasize that without Christ there is no salvation.

- ✦ In Christ we were chosen by the Father before the foundation of the world, became true sons of God, became deserving of salvation and understand His Divine will which is:
- ✦ In Christ, He united the heavenly with the earthly
- ✦ In Christ, He united Jews and gentiles, together we all become partners in the inheritance
- ✦ In Christ, we receive salvation by the forgiveness of our sins and the Holy Spirit dwells in us, which is the guarantee of the eternal inheritance that awaits us in heaven.
- ✦ To gain knowledge and wisdom to know how much we mean to Christ and the glory of the inheritance of the saints.



Let us ask ourselves everyday as the chosen sons and daughters of God: Are we ready to struggle and persevere to gain the eternal inheritance which is reserved for us?

Chapter 2: Christ Unites Humanity in His Church

In this chapter, St. Paul the Apostle describes how Jews and gentiles gained salvation through the grace of God in Christ and how they have become one renewed human being reunited with Christ and how they have become a holy temple for the Holy Spirit.



Be Ready

" Therefore you also BE READY, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect " (Matt 24:44)

The first point refers to our unity with Christ as we are resurrected with Him and sit in heaven, in Him.

The second point refers to our unity with our brothers and sisters and how we all became one

The third point refers to our reconciliation with God

The fourth point refers to our reconciliation with our brothers (Jews and Gentiles)

The unity with Christ and the reconciliation with God were manifested through the cross through which Christ fills everyone

"Through grace you are saved". Grace is a free gift, it is a summary of the work of love and Divine mercy towards us. St. Paul said: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:8-10)

The grace of God is always ready to work in us no matter how much we've sinned, but we should always be ready to struggle and work tirelessly for our salvation

Chapter 3: God's ultimate love for salvation of the gentiles

St. Paul affirms that he is a captive because of his evangelism to the gentiles in the Name of Christ. In other words, he is a captive for Christ and his life is in the hands of Christ not the Jews nor the gentiles.

He affirms what God has revealed to him and to the rest of the apostles, through the Holy Spirit, that the gentiles would receive salvation, and that the gentiles are partners in the eternal inheritance.

God gave St. Paul the gift of revealing this secret to the gentiles through his evangelism of Christ and that's why the Jews resisted him.

Our teacher St. Paul was committed and consistent in his prayers for the believers so that they may be strengthened through the Holy Spirit and that Christ may dwell in their hearts. He also wanted them to be affirmed in love because God is love, realizing God's ultimate love for them.

The love of our Lord Jesus Christ was clearly manifested on the cross, and it is everlasting love as God is love, and He is everlasting.



The love of God is indescribable, that's why the apostle describes it in length, width and height to show how His love can contain all human beings, and that Christ forgives all sins, and His love overwhelms us all. 4

Chapter 4: Renewal In Christian Behavior And Being Steadfast In It

This chapter is the beginning of the practical part of the Epistle which teaches us how we should act as Christians.

Christian behavior among brethren:

1. Living and being steadfast in the commandment of Christ in gentleness, humility, love and longsuffering
2. Keeping the unity of the Church through peace as much as possible
3. Every person has a gift given by God to help the service and the Church
4. Be steadfast in faith so as not to be deceived by false teachers; but in love show them and warn them with gentleness
5. Stay away from all evil deeds
6. We should not only escape from sin, but also struggle in gaining virtues. For example, we should not just refrain from lying, but also speak the truth. We should not just refrain from stealing, but also give to those who do not have. We should not just refrain from anger, but live with gentleness and forgiveness



Let's be steadfast in the commandments of the Lord no matter what our conditions are without making excuses for ourselves, but we must always ready to struggle in gaining virtues until death.

Beware of those who say: "we are all one in Christ" because unity between the Christian denominations will only be achieved if it is based on the one true faith; "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5) and one dogma.

Let us pray to be reunited back to the one true faith and one church under Christ.

Chapter 5: The Christian Behavior

Christian behavior in the midst of an evil society:

1. Follow the commandments of Christ of love, forgiveness and mercy
2. Flee from defilement, greed, bad talk and evil deeds
3. Do not be deceived by those who say there is happiness from sin
4. Walk in the light as sons of light so as to bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit
5. Do not participate in the works of darkness which have deceiving looks
6. Be vigilant and careful and use time wisely in prayers and struggles before time ends
7. Do not be deceived by the false joy from drunkenness but struggle to attain the spiritual joy which is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

✠ **Commandment for married couples:** As the Church obeys Christ as its Head, the wife should obey her husband as he is her head. And because the husband will lead his family in the fear of the Lord, the obedience of the wife to her husband is obedience to God and she has to fear him and respect him.

The man shall love his wife just like Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her. The man shall love his wife as if his own body because she is a part of him. He shall take care of her as they became one through holy matrimony.

Chapter Six: commandment and weapons

Commandments for parents and children:

- ✠ Children should always obey their parents and honor them, this obedience is for Christ, hence He rewards it by prolonging the days of those who obey their parents.
- ✠ Parents also should be careful not to anger their children by being harsh on

Be Ready



them because that causes them to fail, rather disciplining them in the love of God and His commandments.

- ✦ We are victorious by the ultimate weapons of God as mentioned in Ephesians 6:10-14 when we obtain the Chrismation (Holy Mayroon oil).
- ✦ Using the Holy Mayroon oil, the priest anoints the baptized with 36 crosses:
- ✦ 8 (1 on the head), 7 on the senses (eyes, ears, nose and mouth)
- ✦ 4 (heart, belly, back, lower back)
- ✦ 12 on the arms in each joint in the front and back (3 joints*2 crosses*2 arms)
- ✦ 12 on the legs in each join in the front and back (3 joints*2 crosses*2 legs)

The whole armor of God refers to the continuous readiness and struggle to be steadfast in Christ. And Christ who is in us will prevail as we cannot fight Satan on our own. The whole armor of God is complete, without weakness. It is able to protect me completely because it contains Christ's everlasting power that no one, not even Satan, can overcome.

Be Ready

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Type of Weapon	Benefit to Soldier	Christian Name	Spiritual Use
Belt	Strengthens his will and his back	Truth	It's the knowledge of Christ and His commandments and it is the belt that strengthens us
Shield	Protects the chest, the heart and the belly	Righteousness	To be steadfast in the life of righteousness which protects the heart from lusts and the arrows of Satan
Boots	To march to the target	Gospel of Peace	To be always ready to walk according to the will of God to preach the message of the Gospel which is love and peace
Gear	Protects the whole body	Faith	It protects the whole body, without it we are vulnerable to Satan
Helmet	Protects the head and the face	Salvation	Protects our minds and thoughts from all evil thoughts



THE ARMOR OF GOD

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

"... Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." v. 10, 11

The Shield of Faith (Eph. 6:16)

Faith is being sure that God will keep His promises. Faith in God protects you when you are tempted to doubt.



The Helmet of Salvation (Eph. 6:17)

Put on the Helmet of Salvation by believing that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again.

The Breastplate of Righteousness (Eph. 6:14)

Righteousness is being honest, good, humble, and fair to others. It means standing up for weaker people.

The Belt of Truth (Eph. 6:14)

Truth keeps us from giving in to the world's beliefs. Compare your beliefs and actions to the truth of the Word of God.

The Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17)

which is the Word of God. God's Word is our offensive weapon. When we tell others what the Bible says, the Holy Spirit helps people see their bad thoughts and actions, and makes them want to be forgiven.

Feet Prepared with the Gospel of Peace (Eph. 6:15)

The Gospel of Peace is being right with God and being contented in troubled times. Jesus said peacemakers were blessed.

Be Ready With Your Measuring Device

Since the dawn of time, mankind has been using measuring devices to practically identify the natural phenomena around them and the things necessary for use in their daily lives. Measuring systems for length, weight... have been invented from the beginning of civilization for such purposes. These tools were invented to regulate our social and economic lives. Dimensional measurements were used during the Egyptian Pharaohs' time, with the precision that allowed the construction of pyramids.

they were also used in business transactions between different nations, at that time, and throughout.

Measuring tools are very important in our daily lives. Our lives socially, economically, and politically are linked to different measuring instruments.

For example;

1. **The watch:** worn on the arm so that we may know the time and manage it. This is considered a measuring tool!



2. **The scale:** scales of different types, whether in grams for gold and silver, or in kilograms for produce, etc.

3. **The thermometer:** used to measure temperature for either a sick patient or the weather.

4. **Electrical Meter, Water Meter:** located the entrance of a house or the basement to measure consumption, and based on its reading, one receives a bill from the water or electric company.





5. **Trade exchanges:** between different countries are based on balances and taxes.

Also you in your primary school, and now in middle school, you have used several measuring devices. The simplest of them is the ruler to determine the lengths of squares, rectangles, the protractor to calculate angles, triangles, the compass .. and so on ..

As Christians, we also have standards to measure our lives; but they are different

It is a different kind of measurement than what we've been talking about..

Why? Because our lives and our goals are different.

Who is the Christian? What is his/her role on earth? What are the principles that govern Christian behavior and the limits of his/her freedom on earth?

1. Who is a Christian?

A Christian is God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10). Christians lead different lives. They have the everlasting life (John 3:16) to look forward to. They have a different nationality from the rest of humankind, "for our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20): they aspire to things above, (Col. 3:1) therefore, their habits must be different. Based on these things, they live as Christians.

2. What is the role of Christians on Earth?

After the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians that they live not for themselves, for they were bought at a price. That led them to understand the purpose of their living on earth, which is the glorification of God. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify

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God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor 6: 19-20)
I am a Christian, that is to say, God becomes "My Lord" is the absolute reference to everything in my life; I must obey Him in all my actions, thoughts, desires, feelings; I must have Him own my heart. This is what the word "Orthodox" refers to: "true" or "straight" belief. The "Orthodox" is the Christian believer who lives in a straight belief with God.

3. What are the principles that govern the actions of the Christian, and the limits of his freedom on earth?

Based on what we previously discussed, we must answer this question:
Do Christians have absolute freedom in what they do, say, hear or wear ..?

The answer is **NO** .. And these are the reasons

Since the Christian is God's new workmanship, then the habits, behaviors and principles of the world doesn't apply to him/her.

Christians are not kings of themselves, but belong to the One Who bought them. They must then realize that they are not free to behave, put on, eat, or live as they please. But they need to ask Their King- Jesus Christ - before doing anything:

"Is what I am doing now agreeing with You, Blessing You and Glorifying You"?!
So in our spiritual lives and our behaviors, we need an accurate measuring device with (exact criteria), to guide us as to whether we are walking in the right path to eternal life, or have turned away, being tricked!!

This is that exact device that St. Paul the Apostle explains as he wrote to us saying:

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify." (1Cor 10:23)

"All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1Cor 6:12)

Which means all the actions I do must conform to the Christian life, the Christian commandments, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Be Ready



You shouldn't be controlled by any sin, bad habit or bad behavior that has the potential to enslave you. For example, social media, smoking, addictions in various forms, .. etc Every work that we do must increase our faith, the faith of others, and increase my spiritual progress, as well as that of others. We shouldn't do anything that would not build us up spiritually, or is a cause of stumbling for others.

So in every action, in all my dealings, I measure these behaviors or dealings based on the three previous criteria:

- 1- Does this action agree with me being a Christian and the son of God?
- 2- Does this action build my life and my life with others?
- 3- Will this control me? Will I become a slave to it? Is it something that I won't be able to stop and leading to the loss my earthly life and eternity?

If the answer is '**No**' to 1-2, but yes to 3 .. I must:

1- Cut the relationship: Be firm, severe in dealing with any complacency or sin, and do not allow the devil to enter even from "beneath of the door". If you allow him once, he will enter all doors without permission.

2- Purification Stage: Imagine if you have a cat in your house and then you left it for a long vacation. You've asked your neighbors to take care of it but when you came back you find out that your cat died and the house smells horrible. So, what do you do? Of course, the first thing you'd do will be to get rid of the cat's body, but the smell and germs will remain. The house must be cleaned! This means that you should not just remove sin and evil thoughts out of your life, but also be purged of their effects .. "Cleanse your cell phone, your computer, all the means of communication, your whole life."

3- Be Careful: The devil always wants to spoil our minds about the simplicity that we have in Christ Jesus, exploiting an earlier thought or sin which he himself had previously placed in our minds, for which we offered repentance. The devil uses a small situation to return that sin in your life. He waits for any small



Be Ready

"Therefore you also BE READY, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matt 24:44)

sign to return, enter and occupy your mind. Instead of filling your mind with prayers and sermons, having it "Dedicated to the Lord only" and being ready. The devil would turn it into "It USED TO BE dedicated to the Lord".

The devil is very smart and deceitful and knows how to come to each one with the ideas he wants. One may fall through the ideas of pride, uncleanness, evil speech, disobedience, rebellion.

Recite the "Jesus" Prayer as it is like arrow prayer **"My Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, help me and guide me"**. this is a powerful and an influential weapon despite its simplicity. The Name of God terrifies Satan.

- Without our hard work God will not help us if we do not help ourselves first.
- Do not despair or tire of fighting the devil. God is very happy with the work of his children.

Let us see the following situations and measure them with the Biblical Scale using the previous standards:

Mary is a social girl and very lovable among her friends. However, her relationship with her mom isn't very strong. They both have a very hard time understanding each other. She feels that her mom always gets into her business. She enters the house with a bad attitude, not wanting to stay home and not enjoying anything in it. And before she attends church, she had a conversation with her mom;

Mom: Where are you going Mary?

Mary: What do you mean "Where am I going?"? I am going to church. I am not young anymore. You can't keep asking me where are you going?! And why are you late?!

Mom: Is this a proper way to talk to your mother?

Mary: I don't like being asked about every step I am taking. I am old enough now to know right from wrong.

Be Ready



Mom: I am your mother, I am responsible for you. Also, what are you wearing?

Mary: It is the trend. Everyone is wearing it and it is all over the stores.

Mom: But that isn't our kind of clothing. It is also very inappropriate to wear in the streets or go to church with.

Mary: Why isn't it our kind of clothing? Am I less than anyone else? Why can't I wear it in church?

Mom: It is up to you. But I disagree with this action.

Mary didn't listen to her mom and she still went to church with the outfit of her choice. What would you recommend her to have done, using the above discussed Biblical standards?

John and Jessica are siblings. After school, they eat lunch together before they start studying their lessons.

Jessica: John, would you turn the volume on your laptop down? I need to study.

John: Sure, I will put my headphones on.

Mom enters the room.

Mom: How is your school work going?

Jessica: I am done with my homework and now I am reviewing past lessons.

Mom: What about you John?

John isn't answering because he has his headphones on.

Mom (with a louder voice): John, Do you hear me?

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" Therefore you also BE READY, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect " (Matt 24:44)

John: Yes, Mom!

Mom: You have been watching cartoons and playing video games since you came. When are you going to finish your homework?

John: I will finish this one game and get to it right away.

Mom: We'll see!!

After a while, Mom enters the room again and sees John on his laptop.

Mom: Is the game not done yet?

John: I am done with the game. I am just checking my Facebook and responding to my Snapchat "streaks" before I start studying!

If John told you about this story, how would you advise him using the above discussed Biblical Scale?

Do not forget the standards of measurement which we practice all our lives:

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful." (1Cor 6:12)

"All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1Cor 6:12)

"All things are lawful for me, but not all things edify." (1Cor 10:23)

Let's discuss some of the positive and negative situations and let's evaluate them using our scale!

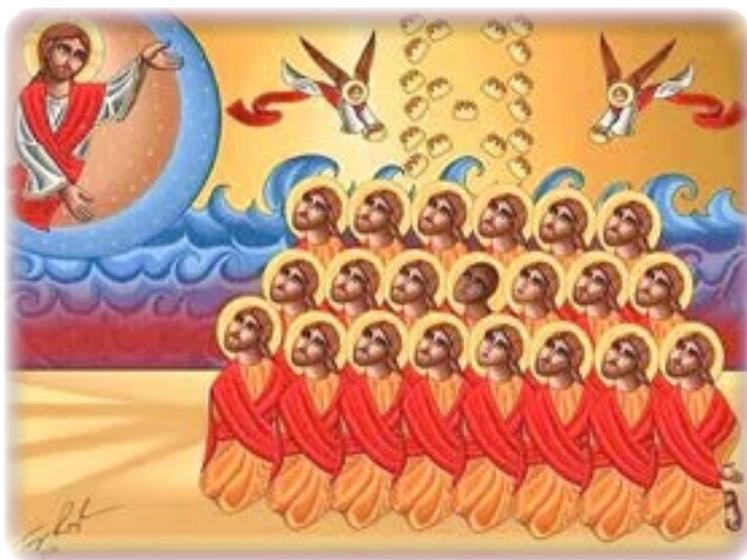
- ✦ Standing during prayers (Focusing and paying attention- Not ...)
- ✦ Our actions inside the church (Respecting the church- Not using my phone during liturgy)
- ✦ Being on time (Attending liturgy early)
- ✦ Cheating in Exams

Be Ready



- ✦ Giving negative comments to others
- ✦ Fashion
- ✦ Serving others (Parents, relatives, sick and
- ✦ Helping in the house
- ✦ Using Social media wisely
- ✦ Addiction to the Internet, Social Media, caffeinated materials, Cigarettes,etc
- ✦ Using a loud voice with your parents
- ✦ Isolation and convergence inside your family, produces negative feelings toward them.

Last but not least, train your tongue to use the magic words; Please, Excuse me, Thank you, May God Forgive You, Sorry..... etc



Place Your Eternal Life Above Your Earthly Life

Eternal life is the goal of all human beings, for it our hearts yearn, and we strive to reach it, and enjoy its beauty. It's the presence forever in true joy, with God , where He dwells with His angels, with the saints and martyrs who lived the vigilant life and struggled greatly till they reached it.

Although heaven is everyone's goal, however, not everyone will get to enjoy it for it says in the Holy Bible ***"Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."*** (Matthew 7:14)

Do you prepare before going to an exam? How? And Why?

What will happen if you go to an exam unprepared?

Which of us is sure that he is going to heaven?

Which of us is unsure whether or not he is going to heaven?

Which of us is sure that he is not going to heaven? And why?

Heaven's gates are narrow, only the humble will be able to enter.

The basics upon which we will enter:

1. **Heaven is a person not a place;** it is Jesus Christ! There is no entrance into His kingdom if we have no knowledge of, or faith in Christ, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" Mark 16:16, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

2. **Baptism:** is the second qualifier for entering the kingdom, and it is an assurance that we believe in Christ's salvation for us and his death and resurrection on our behalf. Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you,



unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." John 3:5. Baptism gives us that second new birth, through which we receive forgiveness of previous sins, but it is not a guarantee, therefore there has to be:

3. **Repentance and Confession:** "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

4. **Communion:** "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:54

5. **Good works:** "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." James 2:17. "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?" James 2:14.

6. **Love for one another**, even our enemies: All the prior requirements without love mount up to nothing, for if anyone is devoid of love, he has no place in heaven, and love is described by the apostle saying: "**My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.**" 1 John 3:18

I should ask myself which of the six requirements do I have? Will be able to enter heaven or not...

Saint Paul And Heaven

Saint Paul had a very strong relationship and bond with the Lord Jesus Christ, and was in constant yearning to go to heaven; therefore, he was always living the life of vigilance. "For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." Philippians 1:23. And he was taken up to the third heaven...



Be Ready

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First heaven: where the bird fly which is the Sky..

Second heaven: where the planets and stars are.
The Galaxy

Third heaven: where paradise of Joy is. The place where the righteous wait for the Second Coming.

He could not describe with words what he saw, so he said ***"how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."*** 2 Corinthians 12:4.

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



Beautiful Description Of The City Of God:

What we know about heaven is very little, especially in comparison to what we don't know about it, but this little knowledge is enough to refresh our faith and our yearning to that heavenly home. ***"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known."*** 1 Corinthians 13:12.

Saint John the Apostle says: ***"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth"*** (Revelations 21:1)

The whole city is made-up of pure gold: can you imagine that that bright gold to human eyes here on earth will be trampled underfoot in heaven?!...that gold is trampled underfoot by the saints.

The city is equal in dimensions: its width is equal to its length... and that symbolizes perfection, for God's city is perfect in its height, width, and length, and so are those who will live in it, they must be perfect.

Be Ready



The city's walls: the city is surrounded by great walls on all four sides made up of gemstones.

The city's gates: The city has 12 gates, with an angel at each gate; "and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. (Rev. 21:12)

The city's foundation: Its foundation made-up of gemstones with the names of the twelve Apostles written on them.

And most importantly in its midst is our Savior putting crowns on the heads of those who love Him.

How Are We Going To Live In Heaven?

Luminous Bodies:

1. Luminous: because they will be made-up of light completely just like the body that our Lord Jesus had after His resurrection. He entered the room where the disciples were gathered while the doors were shut, just as light passes through glass without breaking it.

2. Spiritual: for they are anointed spiritually, making them pure and holy, able to fly in heaven.

3. Heavenly: they will be attracted to heaven, where Christ is seated.

4. Glorified: where they will receive from our Lord crowns of glory, according to everyone's worthiness. "for one star differs from another star in glory." 1 Corinthians 15:41.

The Nature Of Living In The City Of God

1. **No hunger,** nor thirst, nor heat, nor cold in heaven. "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." Revelations 2:7

2. **No sadness,** nor weeping, nor pain, nor sickness: "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Revelations 21:4.



Be Ready

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3. **No lusts**, nor any corrupt desires: "It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 45 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ***"However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man."*** (1 Corinthians 15:46-49)

4. **No envy**, or jealousy or quarrel: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psalm 133:1.

5. **No darkness in heaven**: and darkness will be no more. "There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever." Revelations 22:5.

6. **We will meet all those who went to heaven before us**. We will see all those about whom we have read: the angels, martyrs and saints... not only that, but we will live with them forever.

7. **The life of continual praise**: where we will stand and praise with them and their beautiful voices saying: Holy! Holy! Holy!

Joy Of Seeing And Being With God

The greatest reward man could ever receive in heaven is to receive God himself, and that will be the heavenly life with no more separation ..for there will be nothing that will separate us from him. There the words of the bride of the Song of Songs will be fulfilled: "I am my beloved's, And my beloved is mine. When I found the one I love. I held him and would not let him go" Song of Solomon 6:3, 3:4.

Here we must live the life of vigilance so that we can receive all these eternal glories, and hear God saying to us: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." Matthew 25:21.

Be Ready



How beautiful that this is the heaven that awaits us! Therefore, we must live soberly, and in constant readiness for it. And for it we must endure every pain with joy "Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them." Luke 12:37.



Memorization

THANKSGIVING PRAYER

Let us give thanks to the beneficent and merciful God, the Father of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, for He has covered us, helped us, guarded us, accepted us unto Him, spared us, supported us, and brought us to this hour. Let us also ask Him, the Lord our God, the Almighty, to guard us in all peace this holy day and all the days of our life.

O Master, Lord, God the Almighty, the Father of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, we thank You for every condition, concerning every condition, and in every condition, for You have covered us, helped us, guarded us, accepted us unto You, spared us, supported us, and brought us to this hour.

Therefore, we ask and entreat Your goodness, O Lover of mankind, to grant us to complete this holy day, and all the days of our life, in all peace with Your fear. All envy, all temptation, all the work of Satan, the counsel of wicked men, and the rising up of enemies, hidden and manifest, take them away from us, and from all Your people, and from this holy place that is Yours.

But those things which are good and profitable do provide for us; for it is You Who have given us the authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, by the grace, compassion and love of mankind, of Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, through Whom the glory, the honor, the dominion, and the adoration are due unto You, with Him, and the Holy Spirit, the Life-Giver, Who is of one essence with You, now and at all times, and unto the ages of all ages. Amen.



Memorization

THE COMPLINE PRAYER

Psalm 132

Behold! What is so good, or what so pleasant, as for brothers dwelling together? It is as ointment upon the head, that came down upon beard, the beard of Aaron that came down to the fringe of his clothing; as the dew of Aeron, that comes down upon the mountain of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing and the life forever. ALLELUIA.

Psalm 141

With my voice to the Lord I cried; with my voice to the Lord I made supplication. I will pour out before Him my supplication. My affliction I will pour out before Him, when my spirit was fainting within me, and You knew my paths. In the way in which I was walking, they hid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, for there was no one who noticed me. Refuge failed me, and there was no one who cared for my soul. I cried unto You, O Lord, and said, "You are my hope, my portion in the land of the living. Attend to my supplication, for I am brought very low; deliver me from those who persecute me, for they are stronger than me. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may confess Your name, O Lord. The righteous wait for me until You reward me." ALLELUIA.

The Holy Gospel According To St. Luke (Ch. 2: 25-32)

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen Christ the Lord. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God, and said: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."

Glory to God forever. Amen..

The Litanies

Behold, I am about to stand before the Just Judge terrified and trembling because of my many sins. For a life spent in pleasures deserves condemnation. But repent, O my soul, so long as you dwell on this earth, for inside the grave, dust does not praise. And among the dead, no one remembers, neither in hades, does anyone give thanks. Therefore arise from the slumber of laziness, and entreat the Savior, repenting and saying, "God, have mercy on me and save me."

Δοξα Πατρι κε Ήω κε ἁσιω Πνευατι.

(Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.)

Blf life were everlasting, and this world ever-existing, you would have an excuse, O my soul. But if your wicked deeds and ugly evils were exposed before the Just Judge, what answer would you give while you are lying on the bed of sins, negligent in disciplining the flesh!?

Be Ready



O Christ our God, before Your awesome seat of judgement I am terrified, and before Your council of judgement I submit, and from the Light of Your divine radiance I tremble, I, the wretched and defiled, who lies on my bed, negligent in my life. But I take example of the Publican, beating my chest and saying, "O God, forgive me and have mercy on me, a sinner."

ΚΕ ΝΥΝ ΚΕ ΔΙ ΚΕ ΙC ΤΟΥC ΕΩΝΑC ΤΩΝ ΕΩΝΩΝ. ΑΜΗΝ

(Both now and forever and unto the age of all ages, Amen.)

O pure Virgin, overshadow your servant with your instant help, and keep the waves of evil thoughts away from me, and raise up my ailing soul for prayer and vigil, for it has gone into a deep sleep. For you are a capable, compassionate and helpful mother, the bearer of the Fountain of Life, my King and my God, Jesus Christ, my hope



Memorization

Χερε νε τενησο ερο...

Χερε νε τενησο ερο: ω θεεθοραβ εομεε νωοτ: ετοι υπαρθενοε νηχοτ νιβεν: τμαενοττ εματ υΠιχριστοε.	Hail to you we ask you, O saint full of glory, the ever-Virgin, Mother of God Mother of Christ.
Δηνοτι ντενηπροετρη: επωω εα πεωηρι υμενηριτ: ντετρηα νεννοβι ναν εβολ.	Lift our prayers, to your beloved Son, that He may forgive us our sins.
Χερε θεεταεμιε ναν: υπιωωινη νηταφωη: Πιχριστοε Πεννοττ: τπαρθενοε εθοραβ.	Hail to her who gave birth, to the true Light, Christ our God, the saintly Virgin.
Ματσο υΠβοιε εερη εχωη: ντετρηοτνη νει νενψρη: νητετρηα νεννοβι ναν εβολ.	Ask the Lord on our behalf, to have mercy upon our souls, and that He may forgive us our sins.
τπαρθενοε Βαριαμ: τθεετοκοε εθοραβ: τπροεταηε ετενηοτ: ντε πρενοε ντε τμετρωμ.	O Virgin Mary, the holy Mother of God, the trusted advocate, of the human race
Δριπρεεβεριν εερη εχωη: ναερεν Πιχριστοε: Φηεταρεεφοε: εοπωε νητετρηεμοτ ναν: υπιχω εβολ ντε νεννοβι.	Intercede on our behalf, before Christ to whom you gave birth, that He may grant us, the forgiveness of our sins.
Χερε νε ω τπαρθενοε: τοτρω υμη ναληνηη: χερε πωοτωοτ νητε πενηενοε: αρεεφο ναν νηεμμανοτηλ.	Hail to you O Virgin, the very and true queen, hail to the pride of our race, who gave birth to Emmanuel.
Τενησο αριπενμενι: ω τπροεταηε ετενηοτ: ναερεν Πενβοιε Ιηοοτω Πιχριστοε: ντετρηα νεννοβι ναν εβολ.	We ask you to remember us, O our trusted advocate, before our Lord Jesus Christ, that He may forgive us our sins.

