



Mahragan  
Alkeraza  
2019

# ARISE & BUILD

Nehemiah 2:20



“Therefore we His servants will arise and build.”  
Nehemiah 2:20

**Gr. 7-8**  
English Edition



# ARISE & BUILD



**H.H. Pope Tawadros II**

Pope of Alexandria &  
Patriarch of the See of St. Mark



**H.G. Bishop Mina**

Bishop of Mississauga,  
Vancouver and Western Canada



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
Introduction	4
Let Us Arise And Build	6
Our Bible Is True Not A Myth!	9
The Book Of Haggai - Building Of The Temple	14
The First Missionary Journey Of St. Paul	21
How Lovely Is Your House	30
Tell Me A Story	38
The Story Of The Coptic Orthodox Church	42
Memorization	47



## INTRODUCTION

### Mahragan Alkeraza 2019

As we celebrated the conclusion of last year's Mahragan with the distribution of the trophies for the first, second and third place winners, we were grateful for God's blessings for a successful 2018 Mahragan. His Holiness Pope Tawadros II said during the Awards Ceremony in Egypt, "I am happy to see the activities of the Youth Bishopric, I am glad that our beautiful Church that is 2000 years old is full of young youth and I am proud to see the creative work and achievements of the youth."

Last year, in addition to the usual participation from Egypt and Sudan, we had a great worldwide participation from 192 Churches representing more than 20 countries and 8 languages.

The theme for Mahragan 2019 is "Therefore we His servants will arise and build." (Nehemiah 2:20). This year, God is asking each one of us to grow in Christ. To do this we will learn about the following topics:

1. Our Bible Is True Not A Myth!
2. The Book Of Haggai - Building Of The Temple
3. The First Missionary Journey Of St. Paul
4. How Lovely Is Your House



5. Tell Me A Story
6. The Story Of The Coptic Orthodox Church

We hope that all of you will participate in the Mahragan activities this year, and encourage everyone you know to join us in one of the greatest annual events, presented by our mother, the Coptic Orthodox Church.

May God bless Mahragan Alkeraza this year and the efforts of all the participants and coordinators, through the prayers of our beloved father Pope Tawadros II.

✠  
My best wishes for a happy  
Festival  
✠  
Bishop Mousa



## Let Us Arise And Build

### A. To Arise

*"Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." Ephesians 5:14*

The result of sin is death. Sin destroys the body, separates us from God, and causes the sinner to lose eternal life. Therefore repentance is a must; this is what is meant by "Awake". Repentance is the spiritual awakening in which a human being is fully aware and determined to rise up, to stop the sin, and to return to the bosom of Christ and the life of the Church.

Our church emphasizes the importance of repentance and confession. In repentance, we acknowledge that we are living in spiritual death and are separated from God. We must be determined to leave the sin. We fight against temptation and pressure, showing God our honest intention to live a holy life.

Finally, we confess to a priest, *"He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy"* Proverbs 28:13

This is to fulfill the words of our Lord Jesus Christ to His disciples, where He gave them the authority to bind and to loose. *"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."* Matthew 18:18.

### Important Characteristics For Repentance:

1. **Quick:** It is very dangerous to delay repentance *"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer*



*than when we first believed” Romans 13:11 “In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.” 2 Corinthians 6:2*

- 2. Decisive:** The hesitant repentant is *“a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.” James 1:8*

It is important for a person to be decisive in all what he does, particularly repentance & confession *“How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you” Luke 15:17-18*

- 3. Inclusive:** True repentance must be a thorough & complete repentance of the thoughts, senses, will and deeds.
- 4. Continuous:** Repentance should be continuous all the days of our life. Repentance is a continuous renewal of the mind, that paves the way to the second resurrection and saves us from the second death (which is eternal punishment).
- 5. Fruitful:** *“Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance” Matthew 3:8.* It is not enough to get rid of the negative things but we should work on the positive, and do good deeds. It is unreasonable that the repentant remains futile while the Lord Jesus asks us for the fruit of the Spirit *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” Galatians 5:22-23*



## B. To Build

It is not enough to arise, but we should build. We should...

### 1. Build Our Body

*"For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it"*  
*Ephesians 5:29*

### 2. Build Our Soul

*"A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb"* Proverbs 27:7

"Honeycomb" here means the sin which is a sweet poison. Satisfaction with the Lord Jesus makes man free from the pleasures of the world because it is corrupted, destructive and temporary.

### 3. Build Our Mind

Our presence in the house of the Lord and among the believers fills our mind with holy thoughts. *"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened"*  
*Ephesians 1:18*

### 4. Build Our Spirit

Through prayers, fasting, and partaking in the Holy Sacraments, we are filled with Christ

### 5. Build Our Relationships

In our relationships, within our family, our church and our society, we need to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth bearing fruits with every good deed.

So let's arise and build!

*"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"* Matthew 5:16





# Our Bible Is True, Not A Myth!

The Bible is not a collection of human writings about God, but God's own words, written by humans to reveal the longing of God to the salvation of mankind. It was written by about forty people, and over fifteen or sixteen centuries, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"(2 Peter 1: 20-21) Christ has repeatedly stated to the Jews that what has been said about God outreaching His people has already been fulfilled, and that He is indeed the awaited Savior. The New Testament is hidden in the Old Testament, because the prophecies of the Old Testament about Christ were fulfilled in the New Testament.

## **Are Old Testament Stories Myths?**

This question that has often been asked by some, and has recently raised controversy among people. Mythology is a mythical or symbolic story used to convey a certain idea to people. Ancient civilizations oftentimes based their religions and beliefs on myths and decided the kinds of gods they would worship.

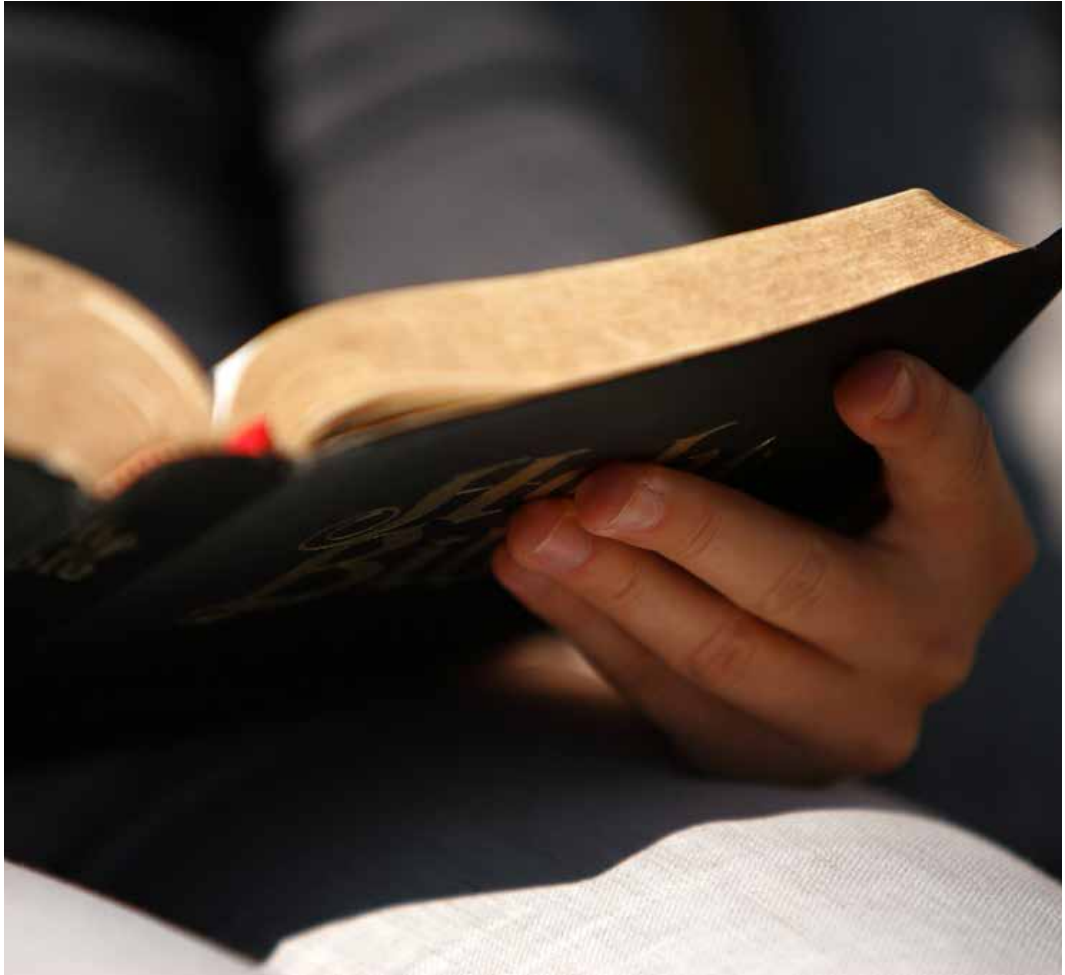
This question is not new to the Church, but has been asked throughout the centuries, and has been answered by the Church Fathers.

Are the first eleven chapters of Genesis legendary as some have claimed? Have these events actually taken place in history? Are characters like Adam and Eve for example, real or just symbols?

Of course these events and characters are real. We believe in the history and literality of all the events of the Holy Bible. In these chapters, the presence of named people:



# ARISE & BUILD





Adam, Eve, Seth, and Enoch, Noah and his children, means and emphasizes that they were all real people who lived on earth and had a role in life, and in manifesting God's dealings with man. With our faith in its literalism, each of them also has the Messianic dimension, and the practical spiritual dimension that we use in our life.

### **What is the meaning of Messianic dimension?**

It means that each event and each story refers to our Lord Jesus Christ and the work of His salvation for mankind.

It is sometimes said that paradise is just a symbol and has no existence. However, the Bible describes Paradise as "planted": *"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed"* Genesis 2:8. He also created trees, rivers, animals, and birds.

St. Irenaeus, who lived in the second century, known as the Father of Church Tradition, said, "In order (for Adam) to be able to live in joy and happiness, God has prepared for him the best place in the world in terms of: beauty, air, light, food, plant, fruit, water;" He did not lack any of the necessities of life, so this place was called "Paradise", and it was beautiful and good. The sayings of the Fathers confirm that this was a true geographical place and not a symbol. This garden existed in the Mesopotamia region (currently Iraq).

### **So what is the danger in believing that Adam was a legendary character?**

1. The Bible says: *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall live"* (1 Cor. 15:22). So if there is no Adam, then Christ also does not exist and His existence is not necessary.
2. In the letter to the Romans, our teacher St. Paul the Apostle made a comparison between Adam and Christ in more than one place, when he



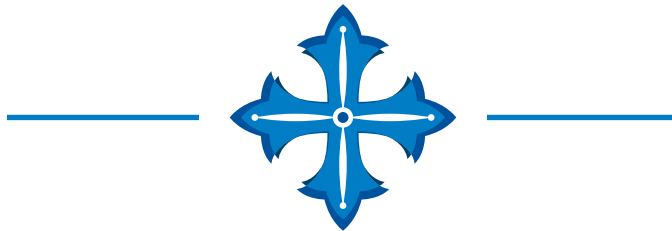
- refers to the first Adam and Christ as the second Adam. So if there is no Adam there is also no Messiah, and our entire Christian faith is then futile.
3. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself spoke about Adam when He said in the subject of marriage: *"Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female?" (Matthew 19:4)*. So Christ confirms that there is a real person named Adam.
  4. In the genealogy of Christ, which is mentioned in the Gospel of St. Luke, the divine revelation says: *"Son of Adam, Son of God" (Luke 3: 38)*. If Adam is not true then the whole genealogy is not true.
  5. Our teacher St. Paul the Apostle says in Romans 5: *"Therefore just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12)*. So who is this *"one man"*? It is Adam the grandfather of all human beings. Because if there are many, as some people claim, if only one of them has sinned, only his family and descendants would inherit corruption, not all human beings.
  6. Then he continues saying: *"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses" (Romans 5:14)*, meaning that there is a real person named Adam, and a real person named Moses. If there is more than one grandfather (Adam), then there will be many *"heirs"* and not one *"Messiah"*.

When we question the reality of the historical events of creation, and call it symbolic and legendary, we destroy the Christian faith from its roots! Why did Christ manifest Himself then? Did He incarnate for a symbolic character which did not exist? The fall of Adam has to be a true story, otherwise the Incarnation and Redemption would not have any meaning or value.



**Our Coptic Orthodox Church believes in three kinds of interpretations of the Bible, and the three are complementary and not contradictory:**

- 1. Historical interpretation:** Meaning that the events or stories took place in history and they are true.
- 2. The Messianic interpretation (related to Christ):** in the sense that these events or stories refer to Jesus Christ and His work for us.
- 3. Spiritual interpretation:** teaching us how a Christian can benefit from these stories, and how to apply the spiritual lessons to our lives and our relationship with God.





## The Book Of Haggai Building Of The Temple

**The Book of Haggai is one of the Old Testament Minor Prophetic books.**

### **Some important facts about Haggai:**

1. "Haggai" is a Hebrew name meaning "festive, joyous, or joyful".
2. He was born in the land of Babylon, and returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel, in the first return in 536 BC.
3. He is considered one of the prophets post-captivity, along with Zechariah and Malachi.
4. His prophetic work was around 520 BC, in the second year of King Darius.
5. He started his work 2 months prior to Zechariah the prophet. They had a good friendship and unity in their prophetic goal.
6. He prophesized for 3 months and 24 days.

The Book of Haggai is composed of two chapters and contains four prophecies.

### **FIRST PROPHECY**

#### **Chapter 1**

He rebukes the people of Israel about building their own houses while leaving the work of building the temple of the Lord. As a result, everyone was excited about building and working.



## SECOND PROPHECY

### Chapter 2: 1-9

He encourages the workers to continue the work and not to grieve over the glory of the old temple, announcing the coming of a temple superior in its glory.

## THIRD PROPHECY

### Chapter 2:10-19

He asserts that when people ignore to prioritize God in their lives, they lose the blessing. He encourages them to persevere with zeal in their spiritual life.

## Fourth Prophecy

### Chapter 2: 20-23

He affirms to the people that the Lord will shake the nations, and will strengthen Zerubbabel as His seal.

## INTRODUCTION

- The name of the prophet fits with the content of the book. It is a call to a joyful life with God, and to enter into a continuous feast of rebuilding the temple of the Lord inside of us through the Holy Spirit "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" 1 Corinthians 3:16
- The true feast is the dwelling of the Lord among His people, and in our hearts.
- The prophet also emphasizes the importance of repentance and holiness, so the Lord can dwell in us and bless our lives.



# ARISE & BUILD







## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- In the days of King Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, the descendant of King David, Jerusalem was overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. The city, the temple, and the palace of the king were completely destroyed.
- The Kingdom of Babylon fell under King Cyrus the Persian in 536 BC. who established the kingdom of Medes and Persia.

Cyrus issued a decree for the return of the people from the captivity in 536 BC, and they began to build the temple in 535 BC.

Cyrus died in 529 BC. His son Artaxerxes succeeded him, and enemies of the Israelites persuaded him to stop the construction of the city and the temple, so he issued an order to stop the work (Ez. 4: 7-24). The work remained suspended throughout his reign.

He died in 522 BC. \* He was succeeded by King Darius in 521 BC. In his days, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah urged the people to work on the construction of the temple. The king ordered the building to be continued. The temple was completed and inaugurated in 515 BC.

## Characters In The Prophecy Of Haggi

### 1. Joshua son of Jehozadak, the High Priest

- Jehozadak, son of Seraiah the High Priest, who was killed by the king of Babylon in the region of Riblah (Jeremiah 52: 24-27).
- The meaning of the name Joshua is "Jehovah saves" (the same name as "Jesus") and the meaning of Jehozadak is "Jehovah is righteous" (and Christ is our righteousness).
- Thus Joshua is a symbol of the Lord Christ, our Chief Priest, who presented Himself as a sacrifice to save us from the death of sin.



## 2. Zerubbabel The Son Of Shealtiel

- The son of Jeconia the king (Matthew 1:12).
- Cyrus the Persian set him governor over Judah (Ez. 5:14)
- He is also a symbol of Christ:
  - » Zerubbabel was born in the land of captivity, and Jesus was born in the land of our bondage
  - » He was one of David's descendants, same as our Lord Jesus Christ
  - » He ruled over God's people after their freedom from captivity; our Lord Jesus Christ is our King and rules over us after He freed us from the bondage of the devil.

## CHAPTER 1

1. In (Haggai 1: 1) the prophet announces the beginning of his prophetic service, and in (Haggai 2:20) the prophet declares the end of his prophetic service.
2. The word "hand" means power, and it means that the word of God is given to the prophets as a spiritual sword to destroy evil, and they must declare it strongly and without fear or hesitation.
3. Haggai delivers the word (the prophecy) to two people to build the temple: Zerubbabel and Joshua, both of them symbolize the person of Jesus.
4. The Lord declared his dissatisfaction with the people, because they left the building of the house of the Lord, and they were interested in building their own houses. They considered external factors as a sign from the Lord that the time of construction has not yet come, but the Lord sends them Haggai the prophet to alert them of the danger of this laziness in building His house. They are asked to build the temple so that God is glorified in their midst.
5. God calls them "This people" (Haggai 1: 2 and 2:14) not "My people" because they had sinned against Him.
6. God gives them three instructions:



- a. "Consider your ways" (Haggai 1:5): Repent and reflect on the cause of negligence. Is it the obvious excuses that we say? Or is it our preoccupation with the pleasures of the world?
- b. "Go up the mountain" (Haggai 1:8): We should not stop at repentance, but after offering repentance, we must raise ourselves to heavenly matters.
- c. "And build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified" (Haggai 1: 8): The Lord calls them to build. Here is an indication that God does not reside in us without our will, or without us. In this way, God affirms His sanctification of our minds & bodies to our free will. That is why He invites us to build His house, and He attributes the work to us even though He is the true builder.

The words of the prophet brought joyful fruit, so Zerubbabel, Joshua and all the people rose and began to work. (Haggai 1:12-15)

## CHAPTER 2

The chapter starts with the second prophecy, a message of encouragement to the builders, who had been working for about a month in building the house of the Lord.

1. This prophecy was said on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, and this day corresponds to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles (The feast of Tabernacles lasts 7 days from the 15th to 21st of the seventh month). This Feast was more joyful than any other day, as if God is telling us, "be filled with joy" not only because of the feast of Tabernacles, but by the work in the house of God.
2. During the work, the elders who lived at the time of the first temple built by Solomon, and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, wept bitterly because they saw that this building is not comparable to the splendor and grandeur of the first house. They spread the spirit of despair into the hearts of the workers, and they turned



the joy into bitterness. This is just like the devil who sows despair in our hearts, once he sees us rejoicing while building the house of God in us.

3. "I am with you": the words of the Lord was to encourage them and us. How can the spirit of despair comes upon us when we hear this beautiful divine promise? He commanded them: "and do", meaning to strive with joy and hope because God is in our midst.
4. "And they shall come to the Desire of All Nations:" Christ is the desire of all nations, and the richness of all the tribes of the earth.
5. "The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former". In terms of comparison between the glory of the first house built by Solomon, and the glory of the house built by Zerubbabel, we find that the first is greater in terms of the splendor of the building, but the Lord refers to the latter (built by Zerubbabel) as His body which is the church. The last building also became greater, for in it the Lord Jesus taught during His service on earth, and by Him, He reconciled the Father and mankind through His blood on the cross (Col. 1:20).

### **In The Third Prophecy (10-19):**

The Lord asks them to purify their hearts, since the purpose of building the temple is to sanctify the heart to the Lord. If we build a temple with impure hearts we will not benefit. When we build the house, we are building ourselves from inside & growing spiritually. Here he asks them to follow the commandments "Ask the priests concerning the law" Haggai 2:11 and stay away from impurity. The third prophecy (2: 10-19) tells us we must abstain from all uncleanness and avoid all unlawful things, to be honest with God and follow the law first.

### **The Fourth Prophecy (20-23):**

Here he directs his speech to Zerubbabel, the governor, the descendant of David, proclaiming that the Lord bless him and will destroy the pagan nations that resist him. This symbolizes that in our Lord Jesus Christ, we enjoy victory, not over human nations with their chariots and horses, but over the evil forces of darkness.



# The First Missionary Journey of St. Paul

## Acts 13-14

Jesus Christ said to His Apostles: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15).

Have you ever thought about how the Coptic Orthodox faith spread, and how the apostles, saints and martyrs shed their blood to build the church, until this faith reached us?

The Apostles did not have any means of communication or transportation to spread the Gospel which exist today, but their faith in God and their dedication to Him and spreading His word, as well as their honest prayer and fasting was all they really needed.

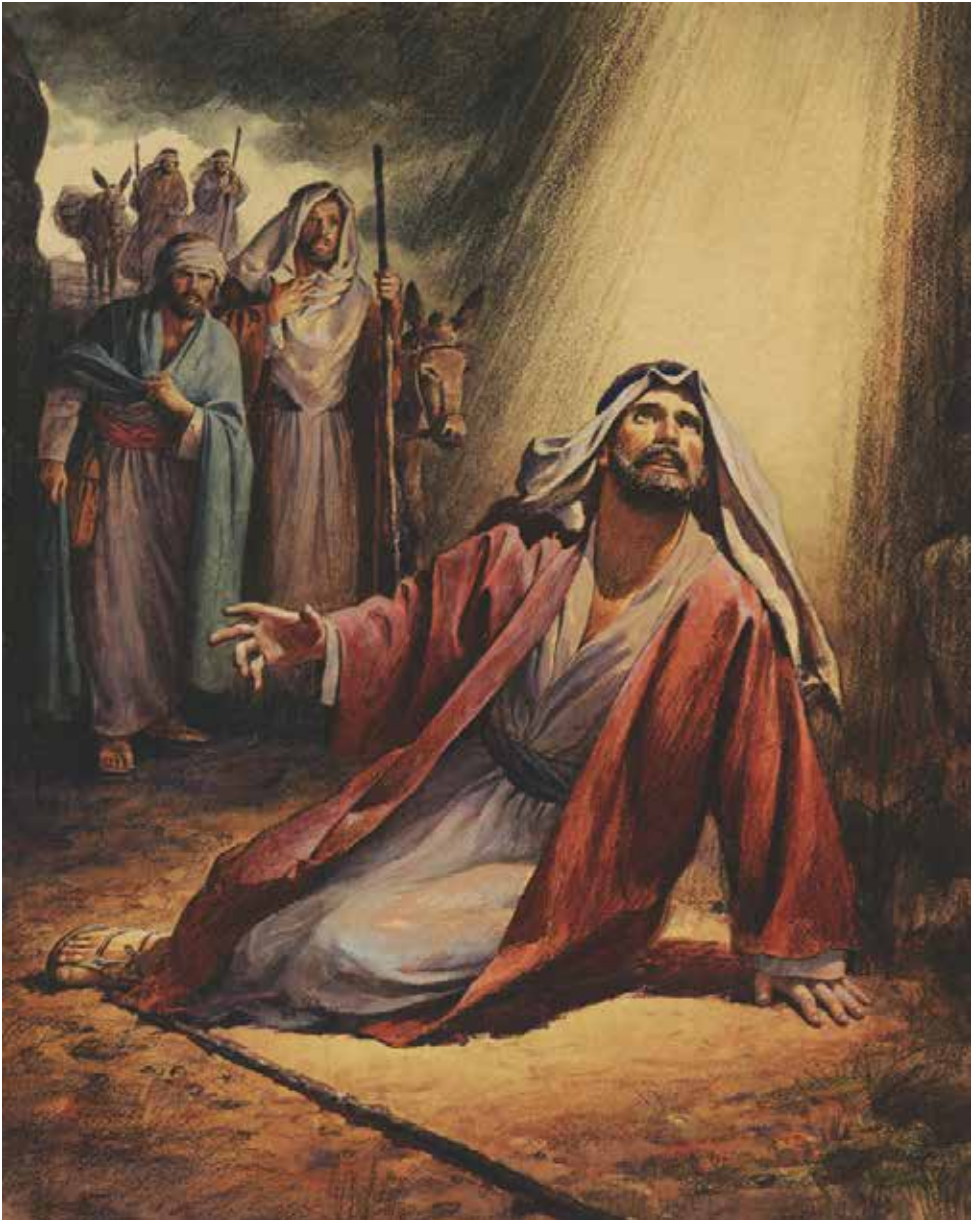
The Holy Spirit always spoke to them and guided them.

One of the heroes, St Paul the Apostle, went everywhere preaching the Christian faith, and wrote more than half of the New Testament. Here are some quick facts about St. Paul.

1. He was born in Tarsus, Celicia, South Asia Minor (now Turkey), around the year 5-6 AD.
2. He was originally called "Saul", a Hebrew name meaning "asked for" or "great".



# ARISE & BUILD





3. He was later on called “Paul” a Roman name meaning “small” or “humble” when Christ appeared to him and changed his name.
4. He was a strict Jew from the tribe of Benjamin (Phi.3: 5), a Pharisee in origin.
5. He obtained the Roman citizenship (Acts 22: 25-29), and had all the rights of Roman citizens.
6. He spoke Hebrew and was well versed in Greek science and philosophy.
7. He was a tent maker.
8. He studied Law and theology from a young age, and was educated by Gamaliel, the most famous teacher of the Jews at the time.
9. He persecuted the church of God out of ignorance with a clear conscience, and was in agreement with the murder of Stephen.
10. Christ appeared to him on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians. Saul who later became St. Paul believed in Him, and became His chosen vessel (Acts 9:15).
11. He was baptized by Ananias, one of the seventy disciples of Christ (Acts 9: 10-22) around the year 36-37 AD.
12. He went to Arabia, the desert of Damascus, and remained until 38 AD. During this time, he learned much about Christianity at the hands of Jesus Christ, through visions and divine declarations (Gal 1: 15-18).

Saint Paul preached all around the world in his three missionary trips. We will study the first trip.



# ARISE & BUILD







## **The First Missionary Trip (Acts 13-14):**

- This trip lasted about 3 years, approximately between 47- 49 AD
- The Holy Spirit chooses Barnabas and Paul to serve.
- The journey began from Antioch, a prominent Christian center, where St. Paul started, and where he would eventually return.
- In Antioch there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas and Simeon, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen and Saul. (Acts 13:1)

## **The First Stop: Paphos (Acts 13:9)**

- They went from Antioch to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus and they arrived to Salamis (Acts 13: 1-5). There they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.
- Mark the Apostle was serving with them.
- They reached the city of Paphos where they found a certain Jewish sorcerer, a false prophet, named Elymas, also called Bar-Jesus, who called for Barnabas and Saul to hear the word of God.
- But he withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul (Roman official) away from the faith. St. Paul rebuked him and he was struck with blindness. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done.

## **The Second Stop: Perga in Pamphylia, Asia Minor (Acts 13:13)**

- They sailed from Cyprus and reached the town of Perga in Pamphylia.
- In Perga, St. Mark departed and returned to Jerusalem.
- St. Mark the Apostle is the nephew of Barnabas the Apostle, he is the



preacher of Christianity in Egypt, the writer of the Gospel of Mark, and the owner of the Upper Room. In Jerusalem, in his home, Jesus established the mystery of the Eucharist.

- They departed from Perga, and came to Antioch in Pisidia.

### **The Third Step: Antioch Pisidia (Acts 13: 14-50)**

- On Saturday, St. Paul stood in the synagogue, preaching to the people.
- In his sermon, he spoke about the history of God with the people of Israel - whom He chose - since He freed them from the land of slavery - the land of Egypt, and took them 40 years in the wilderness, until the coming of Jesus Christ, indicating to them that Christ is the one who was spoken of by Moses and the prophets.
- So the city met on the following Saturday, to hear the word of God from St. Paul and St. Barnabas, this aroused the wrath of the Jews, and they began to resist the words of St. Paul.
- “And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium.” Acts 13: 49-51
- From Acts 13:9 onwards, Saul began to be named Paul.

### **The Fourth Step: Iconium (Acts 14:1-7)**

- They entered the synagogue of the Jews and spoke. Many Jews and Greeks believed, and God supported their work with miracles.
- The non-believers raised some of the Greeks against the apostles, making





the city divided in two, a group with the apostles and another group with the Jews against the apostles.

- The Jews plotted to stone Paul and Barnabas and there was an attack from the Jews and the gentiles on the Apostles, so they fled to Lystra and Derbe

## **The Fifth Stop: Lystra (Acts 14: 8-19)**

- Saint Paul heals a man who was crippled from his mother's womb.

The inhabitants of the city believed that Paul and Barnabas were gods who came down from heaven. They raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" They brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice and worship.

And when the apostles understood what the people wanted to do, they tore their clothes, and cried out to them that they were human beings like them, and that they preached to them the One Lord Jesus Christ, and with difficulty they prevented them from offering sacrifices to them.

- Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came and raised the multitudes against the apostles. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking that he died (Acts 14: 19-21). But Paul arose and entered the city, on the second day and he went out with Barnabas to Derbe.

## **The Sixth Stop: Derbe (Acts 14:21)**

- The saints preached in the city, and made many disciples, then they returned to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch to strengthen the believers in the faith. They appointed priests in every church.

## **The end of the journey, and the way back (Acts 21: 14-28):**



They passed through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia. They preached in Perga, and then went down to Attalia, and spoke the word of the Lord.

- From Attalia, they traveled in the sea to Antioch and then to Jerusalem, where the first counsel was held in 51 AD (Acts 15).

### Results Of The Trip

1. The faith of Cyprus, proconsul Sergius Paulus (Acts 13).
2. The punishment of Elymas the sorcerer – He was struck with blindness (Acts 13: 6-12).
3. The Stoning of St. Paul in Lystra (Acts 14: 19-20).





## How Lovely Is Your House

“How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, Yes, even faints For the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” Psalm 84:1-2  
The church is a building stronger than any other. It is a house of love, established over two thousand years ago on the blood of our Redeemer.

The word “church” in Greek means a “forum”, or a meeting of the whole body of Christian believers.

### **I- The Church Of The Old Testament**

The church building has evolved over the years to suit the spiritual capacity and relationship between man and God.





### 1. **The First Paradise (Genesis 2:8 – 3:24)**

This was the first dwelling of man with God. Adam lived with God in Paradise, in His presence, praising Him. This changed completely with the fall of Adam and his expulsion out of the Paradise. He began to suffer from the separation and isolation from God.

### 2. **The Altar (Genesis 3:21)**

God instituted the concept of redemption when he clothed Adam and Eve with tunics made of skin, i.e. from a sacrifice. From this point, the altar began to take a role in the restoration of the relationship between man and God.

### 3. **Bethel (Genesis 28: 10-22)**

Jacob was in a desperate need to feel the presence of God with him. He was in great distress, because he was fleeing from the face of his brother Esau who wanted to kill him. He had a dream of a ladder reaching up to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. He was afraid and He said, "This is none other than the house of God" Genesis 28:17.

### 4. **The Tabernacle (Exodus 25-27)**

The Tent of the Tabernacle was not designed by man, but was according to the plan that God showed Moses on the mountain after he fasted forty days and forty nights, to be a dwelling place for God in the midst of His people. The presence of the tabernacle in the midst of the people was a reminder of God's presence amongst His people.

The Tabernacle had a very essential role in the restoration of the relationship between God and man. There, the rituals of sanctification with blood, purification in water and the consecration by the anointing with holy oil were performed, and the same rituals are carried in the church of the New Testament, but not as symbols but through the live work of the Holy Spirit. We are sanctified by the blood of Christ, purified with the water of baptism, and sanctified by the anointing



with Myron. St. Paul explains that the tabernacle was “the copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Heb. 8: 5), because it fulfilled the presence of God, declared His love, and His work with His people.

The tabernacle was also called the dwelling, the Tent of Witness and the Tent of Meeting. On top of the tabernacle, a pillar of cloud rested and it was the presence of God amongst them. Every time the pillar of cloud moved, the people would relocate, and when it stopped, the people would settle there. This signified that the people were travelling under the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, and likewise today, the church leads the souls amid the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Jerusalem, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the tent remained in the wilderness, and it did not have a fixed place. Likewise, the Church is a stranger in the wilderness of this world, and her real destination is heaven.

## 5. The Temple In The Old Testament

The word “temple” in Hebrew means “Great House” or “Royal Palace”. This is fitting as the temple was the house of God, the King. When the people settled in Jerusalem, Solomon built the temple, according to the example shown by God to David the prophet his father. The Temple was designed by God as an extension of the Tabernacle, and carries the same sections and contains the same contents, and the same message.

King Solomon built the Temple of Jerusalem in 955 BC. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it in 586 BC. Then Zerubbabel rebuilt it in 515 BC. This temple lasted for five centuries. The temple was completely destroyed, as the Lord Jesus Christ said, in 70 AD by the hand of Titus the Roman governor.

## li- The Church Of The New Testament

### The Shape Of The Church Building

The churches are built in the form of a cross, a circle or an ark (ship).





The Cross - as it is the means of our salvation.

The Circle - to always remind us that the church is eternal

The Ark (ship) - The Church is the ship of our salvation as it protects us from the danger and evil of this world

### **The Direction Of Worship**

The Lord commanded Moses the Prophet to unify the direction of worship in the tabernacle. The tabernacle was directed towards the West, and so was the temple which Solomon the king built. "Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Sun of Righteousness". He is the light that shines, as the light shines from the East, so the churches are built towards the East.

### **In the Old Testament, the Tabernacle and the Temple were directed towards the West**

1. The Holy of Holies was located in the far West, and was entered only by the High Priest once a year, carrying the blood of the sacrifice of atonement for his sins and the sins of the people.
2. When he comes out of the Holy of Holies he heads towards the East, referring to the real sanctuary to which everyone will enter by our Chief High Priest, Our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. When the temple was inaugurated, Solomon stood facing the West, saying that the Lord dwells in the dark cloud, and this is a sign that they could not see the face of the Lord because of their sins.
4. The first Paradise was in the East (Genesis 2: 8). Paradise was closed to man because of sin, therefore the tabernacle and the temple were towards the West.

### **In the New Testament, the Church is directed towards the East**

1. The East is the place of the first Paradise, for this we proceed towards the East, for



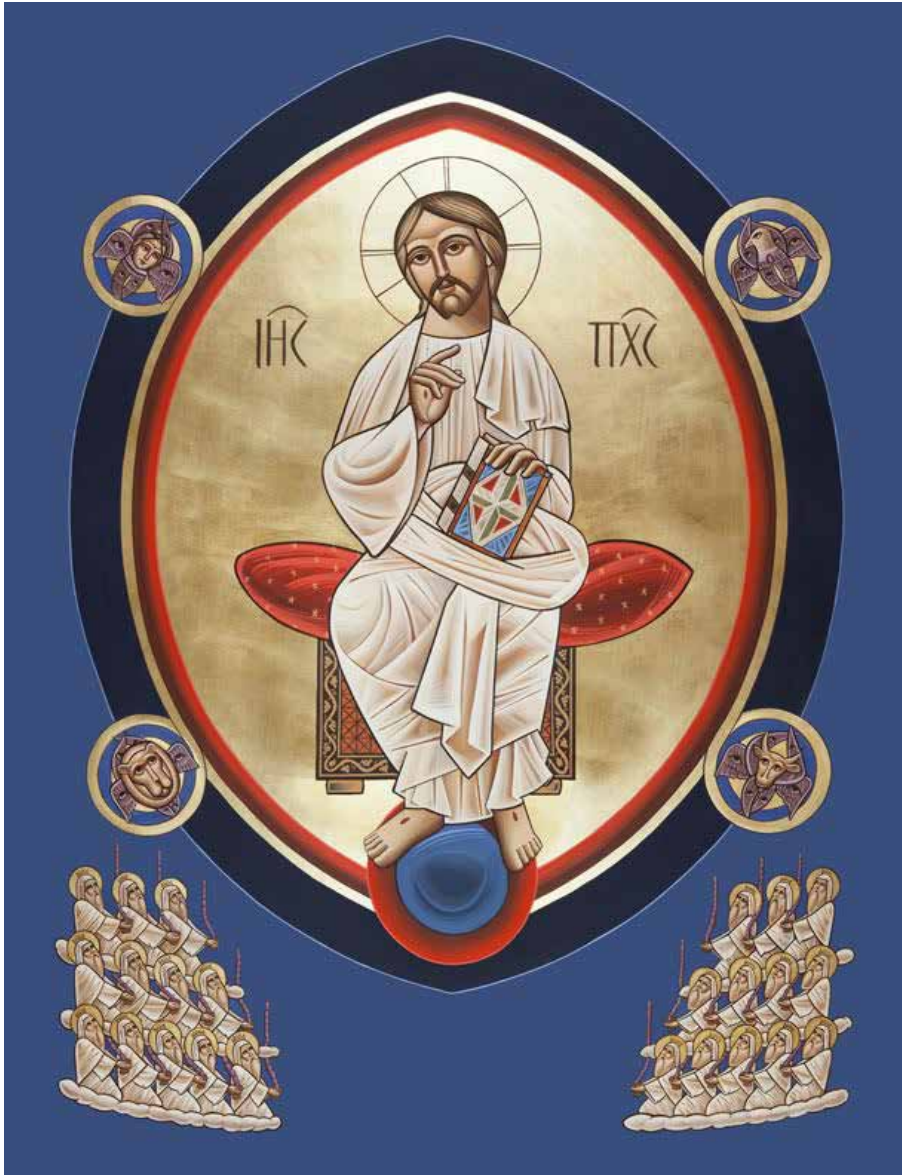
we seek to return to the early life in Paradise.

2. When we proceed towards the East we declare that Christ is our goal, He is called “the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2)
3. In His second coming, Christ will come from the East “For as the lightning comes from the East and flashes to the West, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:27).
  - St. Athanasius the Apostolic reflected on the fact that Jesus Christ on the Cross was looking towards the West, so we conduct ourselves to look towards the East towards the crucified Jesus.
  - St. Clements of Alexandria believes that the direction of the East in prayer reminds us of the beginning of the new life we have received by our baptism. (Just as the sun rises from the East in the beginning of a new day.)

## Inside The Church Building

### The Sanctuary And The Altar

- It is one or two steps above the church nave and the chorus of the deacons because it is the holiest place in the church.
- It is situated in the inner part of the church building, behind the Iconostasis.
- On the altar, we find the holy vessels (the paten, the chalice, the throne).
- behind the altar towards the East, there is a picture of Our Lord Jesus Christ sitting on His throne, drawn inside a half-circular cavity called the “Bosom of the Father”.
- The sanctuary represents heaven. The altar in it is the only means by which the earthly becomes heavenly (bread & wine transforms into Body & Blood of Jesus), by the presence of Our Lord Jesus, who gave Himself up on our behalf of to the believers.
- The Altar in our Coptic Orthodox Church is very special. It is the Holy of Holies. Therefore, the Church has established specific rules for the believers regarding the entry and exit to and from the sanctuary and use of the altar, whether in the time of service or otherwise.





## The Iconostasis

- The iconostasis is between the altar and the church nave. It is mostly made of wood.
- In the center of the iconostasis, there is a main door, called the “Royal door”, because there, the priest chooses the “Lamb”.
- In the case of two lateral altars, the main iconostasis stands out slightly from the side iconostasis, allowing for two side doors as well as the Royal door. These two doors are used in the ceremonial feasts and the entry of deacons in and out of the altar.
- The iconostasis represent the heavenly Jerusalem, with all icons of the saints on it, as it shows the unity between the victorious church (heavenly) and the struggling church (earthly)
- On the iconostasis, the icons of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Virgin Mary, the Angels, and the saints, are towards the church nave, not looking to the east, for they are in heaven watching the salvation of the believers and their coming to Paradise.
- The cross is on top of the iconostasis, as a reference to the Lord Jesus, who opened the gates of Paradise with His cross.
- The icon of the Lord’s Supper, in which the Lord established the sacrament of the Eucharist is on the top of the Royal door. It refers to our Lord Jesus the true invisible Priest who resides in the altar.

## The Church Nave

- The word “Nave” comes from the Latin word “Navis” meaning “ship”.
- The nave plays the role of the ship in the lives of the faithful, lifting them up through the liturgies that are held in it, and through the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ on the altar, above the sea of this troubled world, and keeps them from drowning.



### **The Nave Includes:**

- a. **The Podium:** The word “Podium” in Greek is called “Ambon”, meaning “elevator”, where the Bishop or the priest goes up to preach to the people. It refers to the Upper Room where the Savior taught His disciples. It is located in the north of the church close to the center so the audience can hear well.
- b. **The Mangalia:** A Coptic word meaning the place of the Gospel. It is an alternative to the Ambon, for the reader to read the Gospel.
- c. **The Domes:** The circular caved ceiling of the church, often with an Icon of Christ on the throne, in heaven.
- d. **The Pillars:** Twelve pillars, a reference to the twelve apostles.
- e. **The Lakan:** A round basin placed in the church floor, in the western part of its nave. Now most churches use portable ones. It is used three times a year in the following occasions: The Holy Thursday, The Feast of the Epiphany, and the Feast of the Apostles.
- f. **The doors of the Church:** The Church has three doors, a symbol of the Holy Trinity. One on the left and one on the right and the main one in the middle on the west side so that the believers going through them head to the East.
- g. **The baptism is in the far west of the church nave.**



## Tell Me A Story

### **Saint Shenouda The Archimandrite**

Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite is one of the great saints in the history of the Church and one of the great fathers in the monastic order, known for his holiness since his childhood. His story is as follows:

#### **1- His Childhood**

Shenouda was born of pious Christian parents in the village of Shandala in Akhmim (in Sohag) in the year 333 AD. His parents raised him in the fear of God. He loved prayers, reading the bible and going to church as his parents taught him. His father used to send him to tend to the sheep with the shepherds to train him to work since he was a little boy. In the field, Shenouda used to pray near a well from sunset until late at night. He was under the age of ten at that time.

#### **2- In The Wilderness**

When Shenouda's father noticed his piety and his love for solitude, he took him to his uncle, St. Bigoul, the abbot of a monastery in Upper Egypt. Shenouda's father said to Anba Bigoul, "Father, bless this boy." But Anba Bigoul put Shenouda's hand on his head, saying: "I am the one who must take the blessing of this boy because he is a chosen vessel for Christ."

He foretold that the boy would have a strong spiritual life, and from that time, Shenouda stayed with his uncle. One of the monks saw that his fingers were shining with light like candles when he raised his hands in prayer. The Lord's angel appeared to Anba Bigoul in a dream and told him to dress the child Shenouda with the Holy





Eskeem (A piece of leather trimmed and adorned with crosses). He predicted that he would be the father of many monks.

The monk Shenouda lived an ascetic life. He lived in solitude in a cave away from the monastery for 5 years. His sanctity attracted a large number of those who wish to live in the ascetic life. In 383 AD, after the departure of Anba Bigoul, Shenouda was chosen to succeed him as the abbot of the monastery.

He was called “Archimandrite” meaning the leader of those practicing the life of solitude. He encouraged some of the monks to withdraw to the wilderness for a few years after practicing the communal life, without complete separation from the monastery.

He was firm in his leadership. His disciples’ lives were full of prayers, spiritual struggle, work and service for the kingdom of God. He had a special interest in studying the Bible and encouraging the monks to memorize passages from it.

Abba Shenouda was known for his good deeds. He opened the doors of his monastery to the believers, and he took care of them. He also gave special care in building churches in villages. He destroyed the temples of idols in Akhmim, and fought against witchcraft and sorcery, which had spread in those days. He fed the hungry, helped the poor and the sick, offered shelters to the strangers, and fought for the rights of the oppressed.

### **3- The Fruits Of His Life**

Abba Shenouda lived for about 119 years, he was the abbot of several monasteries for 66 years. He was the leader of about 2,200 monks in the Red Monastery, 1,800 monks in the White Monastery and more than 1,800 nuns.

He was a national leader that led his people in fighting the Byzantine imperialism.





He attended several ecumenical councils and participated with Pope Cyril the Great, known as the Pillar of the Faith, in the council of Ephesus in the year 431 AD. He had a prominent role in defending the doctrine against Nestorius.

Nestorius claimed that Christ has two separate and distinct natures. When Jesus was doing miracles, He was the Son of God. When He suffered, hungered, thirsted and when He died, He was the human being, the son of Mary. Nestorius rejected the union of the human and divine natures. He called it a connection, and said that the Virgin cannot give birth to God, since a creature cannot give birth to its Creator, and claimed that what was born of flesh is nothing but flesh. As a result of his claim to separate the divine and human nature of Christ, he denied St. Mary's title of Theotokos, "The Mother of God" but claimed that she was just the "Mother of Jesus".

Abba Shenouda along with Pope Cyril revealed the corruption of his teachings about the nature of Christ, and fought hard to defend the faith. Pope Cyril called him the "Saint Prophet".

Abba Shenouda departed in peace in 452 AD, and has many works that are difficult to enumerate. The church celebrates his departure on 7 Abib and the consecration of his church on the 1st of Kiahk. May his blessings be with us, Amen.



## THE STORY OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Church of the New Testament was established on the day of Pentecost by the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples. Christianity began with a group of fishermen and ordinary people in accordance with the words of Jesus Christ to them:

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”(Mark 16:15).

In just a few years, the twelve disciples and the seventy Apostles managed to spread the good news about our Lord Jesus Christ all over the known world at that time, in North Africa, Asia Minor, Europe and India.

The Apostolic Sees were established by the Apostles in several important centers in the world.

### **Apostolic Sees In The First Christian Era**

The following cities were given the title “Apostolic See” because they served as spiritual centers from which the service extended to other neighboring places. This was due to their culture and geographical locations. The apostles used to go on missionary trips, and then return to these centers.

#### **1- The Church of Jerusalem:**

Jerusalem was known as the center of Judaism for the whole world. The Christian Church was born in Jerusalem after the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples in the upper room in the house of St. Mark. Jerusalem then became the center of



evangelism for all the apostles. Its first bishop was St. James the Apostle who was the head of the Council of Jerusalem.

This city was visited by the Lord Jesus and witnessed many miracles performed by the apostles in the name of our Lord Jesus. It was also blessed with the blood of the first martyr, St. Stephen the archdeacon, as well as the apostles St. James and St. James the brother of the Lord (Jesus' cousin). It was considered the Mother Church at that time but did not retain its religious status because of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

### **2- The Church Of Antioch (Syria):**

This was the closest church to Jerusalem and the commercial capital of the Roman Empire, connecting the continents of Asia and Europe. St. Barnabas preached there first and, then St. Paul and St. Barnabas (Acts 11: 22-26) went again to visit. Antioch offered a lot of help to the missionaries. The Church of Antioch was the first universal church and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. St. Peter visited Antioch after the Council of Jerusalem (Gal 2: 11) and St. Paul made it the center of his missionary journeys.

### **3- The Church Of Alexandria:**

The city of Alexandria at the time of the preaching of the Apostles was politically the second city in the Roman Empire after the capital Rome. It was also the world's cultural capital at the time and was inhabited by Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Jews, and others. Its famous school was the largest scientific and philosophical center in the world of paganism, which drew many famous Greek and roman scholars and philosophers. It also had the largest and most famous library of valuable books and manuscripts.

The church there was founded by St. Mark the Apostle, who also wrote the Gospel of St. Mark.



Afterwards in the later centuries, the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople were also added to the Apostolic Sees. Therefore, there were five apostolic Sees in the world.

## **St. Mark And The Institution Of The Church Of Alexandria, Egypt**

- St. Mark the Apostle preached in Egypt during the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero in the first century AD, about twenty years after the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and His ascension to heaven. Because of this, the Coptic Church (the church of Egypt) is called the “Church of St. Mark”, and the Pope of Alexandria is called “The Patriarch of the See of St. Mark”.
- The Church remained one in its faith until the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451 AD, where the churches were divided into two groups:
  - » A group that believed that Christ is of one nature, without mixing or confusion or alteration, meaning that the divine nature is united with the human nature into one nature which is the nature of the God incarnate. This was the belief of the oriental churches under the leadership of the Coptic Church of Alexandria. This group of churches is referred to as non-Chalcedonian churches and the Oriental Orthodox Churches.
  - » The other group believed that Christ has two natures after the union, and this is what the Council of Chalcedon agreed on. These churches, led by the Church of Rome, agreed with the Council of Chalcedon. This group of churches is referred to as Chalcedonian churches.
- In the eleventh century, there was another split between the Chalcedonian churches; some churches followed Rome, and were called the Catholic churches (i.e. the Western Churches), and the others followed Constantinople and were called the Eastern Orthodox Churches (i.e. the Greek Orthodox Church).
- In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther revolted against the Catholic Church. This was called “the reformation”. He started in Germany, where he objected to some





teachings that started in the Church of Rome, and gave his followers the title of “Protestants”. Within the Protestant Church, there have been many divisions until this day.

- The non-Chalcedonian churches (which did not believe in the council of Chalcedon), led by the Church of Alexandria, continued throughout the centuries to maintain their true faith, which they received from the Lord Jesus and His holy apostles, with no deviations.
- The different denominations started to come to Egypt from abroad. Catholicism began to enter Egypt through the crusaders led by Louis IX in 1248 AD.
- Protestantism came to Egypt and was formally established in April 1860, meaning that it entered Egypt only about a century and a half ago.

## The Spread Of The Coptic Church In The World

- His Holiness Pope Cyril VI (the 116th Patriarch) was credited for evangelism outside Egypt, and the Church received full care during his Papacy. In his Papacy, the first churches were founded in Australia, Canada, the United States, Kuwait, Lebanon, and others. His Holiness also paid attention to the service of the Church in Ethiopia, and he appointed an Ethiopian Metropolitan.
- His Holiness Pope Shenouda III (the 117th Patriarch) continued in the same spirit, and the Church’s care was his main concern, especially after the growing numbers of immigrants and the increase in their need for ecclesial service. His Holiness sent priests to the new churches abroad to solve problems and overcome the difficulties that the churches faced right away.
- In 1987, he began his first visit to the churches in the lands of immigration. His annual visits continued year after year. On visits, he would inaugurate the new churches and hold meetings with the priests of the region.
- The Papacy of Pope Shenouda III witnessed a tremendous and obvious development in the spreading of the Coptic Church all over the world.
- Pope Tawadros II (the 118th Patriarch) continues on the same process. May God keep him for the church for many years to come.



## Memorization

# THE PRAYER OF THE 9<sup>TH</sup> HOUR

## PSALM 110

I will confess You, O Lord, with my whole heart, in the council of the upright, and in their congregation. Great are the works of the Lord, examined are all His wills. Majesty and splendor are His works: and His righteousness endures forever and ever. He has made a remembrance of all His wonders: the Lord is merciful and compassionate. He has given food to those who fear Him: He shall remember His covenant forever. He has declared to His people the power of His works, to give them the inheritance of nations.

The works of His hands are truth and justice: all His commandments are faithful: established forever and ever, made in truth and uprightness. He sent redemption to His people: He commanded His covenant forever: holy and fearful is His name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and understanding is good to all who do according to it. His praise endures forever and ever. ALLELUIA.

## PSALM 112

Praise the Lord, O the servants, praise the name of the Lord. Let the name of the Lord be blessed, from now and forever. From the risings of the sun to its settings, praise the name of the Lord. The Lord is high above all the nations; upon the heavens is His glory.

Who is like the Lord our God? Who dwells in the high places, and looks upon the low things in heaven and on the earth: who lifts up a poor person from the earth, and raises up a needy person from the ash heap; to seat him with the princes,



even with the princes of his people: who makes a barren woman in a house, rejoicing as a mother of children. ALLELUIA.

## **THE HOLY GOSPEL** LUKE 9:10-17

And the Apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them, and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. And the multitude, when they knew it, followed Him: and He received them, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing.

And when the day began to wear away, the twelve came, and said to Him, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get provisions: for we are here in a deserted place."

But He said unto them, "You give them to eat." And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish; unless we go and buy food for all these people." For they were about five thousand men. And He said to His disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of fifty." And they did so, and made them all sit down.

Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. And they ate, and were all filled, and twelve baskets of the remaining fragments were taken by them.

## **LITANIES OF THE NINTH HOUR**

1. O You, Who tasted death in the flesh in the ninth hour for our sake, we the sinners, put to death our carnal lusts, O Christ, our God, and deliver us. Let my





supplication draw close before You, O Lord; according to Your word give me understanding. Let my petition come before Your presence; according to Your word revive me.

2. O You, who commended the spirit into the hands of the Father as You hung on the cross, in the ninth hour, and guided the Thief who was crucified with You into entering the Paradise, do not neglect me, O Good One, nor reject me, I, the lost one; but sanctify my soul and enlighten my understanding, and allow me to be a partaker of the grace of Your life-giving mysteries; that when I taste of Your benevolences, I offer You praise without lukewarmness, longing for Your splendor above all things, O Christ our Lord, and deliver us.
3. O You who was born of the Virgin for our sake, and endured crucifixion, O Good One, and abolished death by Your death, and manifested resurrection by Your resurrection, O God, do not turn away from those whom You have created with Your own hands, but manifest, O You Good One, Your love for mankind. Accept from Your mother an intercession on our behalf. Deliver, O Savior, a humble people. Do not leave us to the end, and do not forsake us forever. Do not break Your covenant, and do not take away from us your mercy, for the sake of Abraham, Your beloved, Isaac, Your servant, and Israel, Your saint.
4. When the Thief saw the Prince of Life hung on the cross, he said: "Had not the One Crucified with us been God Incarnate, the sun would not hide its rays, nor would the earth have quaked trembling. But O, the Almighty One who endures all things, remember me, O Lord, when You come into Your kingdom."
5. O You who accepted unto Him the confession of the Thief on the cross,



accept us unto You, O Good One; we who deserve the sentence of death because of our sins. We all confess our sins with him, acknowledging Your divinity, and cry out with him saying, "Remember us, O Lord, when You come into Your Kingdom."

6. When the mother saw the Lamb and Shepherd, the Savior of the world, hung on the Cross, she said while weeping, "The world rejoices in receiving salvation, while my heart burns as I look at Your crucifixion which You are enduring for the sake of all, my Son and my God."



A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing, spanning the width of the page.



**COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE**

Diocese of Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada



To order please contact

**Canadian Coptic Centre**

1245 Eglinton Avenue West  
Mississauga, ON  
L5V 2M4

905.567.4032  
[www.mahragan.ca](http://www.mahragan.ca)  
[info@mahragan.ca](mailto:info@mahragan.ca)