

April 2022

THE WINEPRESS

O taste and see that God is good



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PRAYER FOCUS FOR MAY

What should you pray for in this brand new month?

Seek the Lord in sowing the gospel seed in challenging times and for His guidance for our upcoming Annual General Meeting.

Prayer pointers can be found on page 4.



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POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

BY REV ANTHONY LOH

We celebrate Easter. We sing Hallelujah to the Lord, for He is risen.

Easter Day may be just one day (14th April, 2022) but Jesus spent 50 days with His disciples before He was taken up to heaven. Hence, according to the Lutheran calendar, the liturgical season of Easter stretches for 7 weeks, until the Day of Pentecost on 5th June, 2022.

The whole liturgical season celebrates the Resurrection of Christ. Even with the end of the Holy Week, we continue to sing Hallelujah in our heart and reflect on how the risen Christ impacts lives today.

The Resurrection gives us hope. If Jesus did not resurrect from the grave, God's salvation plan would have been invalid, meaning that you and I would never have known the joy of becoming God's child.

VICTORY OVER DEATH

Christ's Resurrection means victory over death.

Christ could not be held down by death's prison. Truly, the power of Christ overwhelmed the power of death. Thus, those who believe in Christ will live with Him. This is the greatest promise to all of us today:

"This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him." – Acts 2:23-24

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Yes, Christ now possesses the keys of hell and of death:

"I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades." – Revelation 1:18

Today, because of Christ's Resurrection, we are guaranteed God's Salvation Plan.

1 Cor 15:3,13-17

3 *"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,*

13-17 *"If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."*

Let us not allow fear of uncertainty to dominate our lives!

VICTORY OVER THE DEVIL

Satan's downfall began With Christ's Resurrection.

"How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!" – Isaiah 14:12

Satan came and deceived mankind. Thus, we are under the bondage of the evil one when we live our lives following the pattern of the kingdom of darkness. We can set ourselves free, like the Israelites in Pharaoh's hands.

The bible urges us to submit ourselves to God and resist the devil and he will flee from us. (James 4:7)



GROWING STRONG AND CONFIDENT

Christ has won His victory over death and over the devil.

"Through this overwhelming victory, God has also empowered you to overcome any temptation to sin and has provided sufficient resources for you to respond biblically to any problem of life. By relying on God's power and being obedient to His Word, you can be an overcomer in any situation." – John C. Broger (late American Christian missionary)

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)

As we continue to sing Hallelujah to the Lord, for He is risen, let's allow the power of the Resurrection to grow us stronger and more confident in Christ.

PRAYER FOCUS FOR MAY

LIVING IN CHRIST'S RESURRECTED POWER

Pray for the empowerment of every JCCian to live in the power of the risen Lord.

SOWING IN CHALLENGING TIMES

The Lord has provided us seed to plant into the lives of others (2 Corinthians 9:10).

Pray that all JCCians recognize the importance of sowing the Gospel seed despite challenging times.

Pray that God grants us courage and opportunities to share the Gospel in our personal lives, in Cell outreach and via the Goshen Initiatives.

AGM AND NEW LEADERSHIP

We look to God for guidance and wisdom to conduct our AGM satisfactorily.

May the Lord grant us His blessings to raise up faithful servant leaders (new councilmen) to lead JCC for the work ahead.



Befrienders of Cyclists

Sundays 3-4pm

assist with bicycle care and making friends / sharing Christ with visitors

Urban Farming

Saturdays

curating church's herb garden and making friends / sharing Christ with other green fingers

Manna Bridge

Fridays 7.30pm on

distributing bread and making friendships / sharing Christ with needy residents

KidsREAD Programme

Saturdays 1-2pm

storytellers trained by NLB to conduct a 6-month reading programme with children

Vulnerable in Community

Weekly/bi-weekly

partnering with MSF to provide social / spiritual support for the less privileged in community

Support for Single Parents

Weekly/bi-weekly

partnering with Fei Yue to provide social / spiritual support for lone-parent families

GOSHEN INITIATIVES

Go to jcc.sg/goshen or email peggytan@lutheran.org.sg



SAD FRIDAY – GOOD FRIDAY – EASTER

BY JOHN LEE

SAD FRIDAY

On a certain Friday on Mount Calvary in Jerusalem in the 1st Century, a man named Jesus was crucified for a crime he did not commit – the “crime” of blasphemy for claiming that he was the Son of God. (Lk 22:66-71) His accusers did so out of self-interest. (Mt 27:18)

The Passion of Christ, which we recall in our Lenten reflection, culminated in His death on the Cross. Was that **THE END**?

On this sad Friday, the hopes of Jesus’ disciples were devastated. Two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus confessed their hope that Jesus was going to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21); but ... it was **THE END** like that – **THE END** of their hope. They did not know that the person walking alongside them and talking to them was the risen Christ.

GOOD FRIDAY

A sad Friday became a holy day called “Good Friday” when it moved from **THE END** of hope in the minds of Jesus’ disciples to the beginning of hope. Their lives dramatically changed after meeting the risen Christ.

In an earlier incident when Jesus was clearing the temple courts (John 2:13-19), he replied to the Jews who asked him for a sign to prove his authority: “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

Jesus was speaking prophetically about his impending death and resurrection. Indeed: “After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.” (John 2:22)

RESURRECTION – OUR FAITH FOUNDATION

The resurrection of Christ is the foundation of the faith of the Christian Church. The whole body of Christian doctrine stands or falls with it. Apostle Paul made this point clear:

- “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.” (1 Cor 15:14)
- “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.” (1 Cor 15:17)

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” (1 Cor 15:20-22)

Doubters of supernatural events ask for proofs of the resurrection. However, believers can correspondingly ask them for proofs that

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something is false just because they cannot understand it, or that all realities without exception can be fully understood rationally by human minds.

HOPE OF EASTER

Easter commemorates Jesus' resurrection which represents hope and new life.

If Jesus' resurrection is incomprehensible to doubters, likewise it is hard for people without faith to conceive the spiritual resurrection of souls dead in sins to newness of life in the heavenly realms in Christ by grace. (Eph 2:1-10)

We have a bad record of conduct and remain undeserving of a bright eternal future in the heavenly kingdom, save by God's grace that we receive our salvation. (Eph 2:8-9).

For this we must thank God that the Passion of Christ along Via Dolorosa leading to the Cross on Good Friday does not signify **THE END** – because “by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Heb 2:14b-15)

“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” (Rom 4:25)

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.” (1 Pet 1:3-6)

As for those who don't believe, it is not yet **THE END** of hope. The Bible says:

“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.” (Rom 10:9-10)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Suffering is always difficult to bear and never desired. However, in Rom 8:18-24, Apostle Paul shows us that suffering is the path we tread as we move to blessing and glory.

Meditate on the following contrasts:

- The Cross (message of suffering) and the Resurrection (message of glory)
- The disciples' 180-degree swing of emotions from Good Friday to Easter

WATCH

THE STORY OF EASTER – FOR CHILDREN



Click the image above to watch the video.



GOD'S INVITATION: "COME!"

BY JOHN LEE

ISAIAH 55: 1-2

FOREWORD

This is my reflection on part of the sermon delivered by Bro. Joseph Hiow on Mar 27.

When listening to a sermon, does the saying "one ear in, the other ear out" (metaphorically) ring true for you? If over time you do not retain more than 10% in your head, you are normal. I have read about studies showing that people remember 10% of what they hear, 20% of what they read and 80% of what they see.

Thankfully, modern technology allows sermons to be recorded and played back as many times as we are interested to benefit from the messages.

Greater benefits accrue from our ability to improve our retention to 20% by reading additional material in our follow-up bible study and to a higher percentage by what we see of the PowerPoint illustrations on YouTube.

Particularly for me who has poor hearing, points from a sermon often stir up my interest to inquire more by referencing useful resources such as these that I would recommend: The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB) and www.biblegateway.com.

THE SERMON POINT: COME!

Bro. Joseph began his sermon by quoting a report that 7 out of 10 people in Singapore are worried about the prevailing high cost of living, particularly relating to food and energy brought about by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

With life getting tougher and more challenging, one may be driven to ask, "Does God still care for me?" Bro. Joseph pointed us to the time when the Israelites also had their faith tested because of their troubles. Against this backdrop of great need, God invited His people to come to Him:

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare."
- Isa 55:1-2

God's gracious invitation is emphatic with the word "**come**" occurring four times in a single verse.

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THAT WHICH IS FREE: SALVATION

My interest was piqued about the food and drink that can be bought without money, and the food that is not worth buying because it is not bread.

As TLSB tells us, "In the OT, longing for God and His wisdom is often associated with longing for water and food."

As the deer pants for streams of water, my soul thirsts for the living God. (Ref. Ps 42:1)

When God fed the Israelites with manna, it was not just feeding their hunger with ordinary food. More significantly, it was a miraculous provision that neither the Israelites nor their ancestors had known. It was purposed to teach them that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. (Ref. Deu 8:3)

In the NT, what do we understand about eating and drinking that are desirable and can be had without money?

Jesus is the living bread. (John 6:25-40) He is the living water. (John 4:7-15)

More completely, we should acknowledge that Jesus is our eternal living bread and our eternal living water. It is not ordinary bread and ordinary water.

Jesus is our salvation.

THE BANQUET INVITATION: "COME!"

The Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-23) also alludes to salvation. God is ready with His invitation: "Come, for everything is now ready."

No angpows are required to accept the invitation. Unfortunately, many of the invitees are not ready. They are interested in other things. Instead of delighting in the richest of fare for free, they prefer to spend money on what is not bread, and their labor on what does not satisfy. (Isa 55:2) They give a lot of excuses. (Luke 14:18)

TLSB says, "No one is forced to obey the summons. However, those who disregard it must reckon with the possibility that they have heard it for the last time (Is 49:8; Jn 12:35; 2Co 6:2)."



BAPTISM OF MR YEO LAY LEH

(杨来礼)

On Easter Sunday 2022, Dialect service witnessed the baptism of Mr Yeo, who joined us on 14 November 2021. He was introduced to Seline by Elizabeth from Chinese Section. Mr Yeo had experienced a healing from the Lord and wanted to be a Christian. Seline invited him to join the Dialect service and after attending half a year, he decided to get baptized.

It was a happy day for Mr Yeo and all his relatives who came to witness his baptism officiated by Rev Anthony Loh with Deacon Nathan translating.

FORGING AHEAD, SHARING EASTER JOY

BY TONY KOH AND PATRICK LOW



Our Easter celebration on 18th April reminds us of God's love.

We sang the Easter hymn "Because He Lives, I can face Tomorrow ..."

"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." – 1 John 4:11 (NIV)

In the spirit of sharing our Easter joy, the ABCs cell group gladly distributed LOVE gift packs to the residents of Blk 111 Taman Jurong. This is the block that we will adopt under the Goshen Initiatives' Manna Bridge link.

Visiting and connecting with our neighbours, we build friendship with them no matter who they are. As we see the needs among them and muster up whatever efforts we can to help, they will know that we are Christians because of our love.

We continue to support the Goshen Initiatives. We love to tell the old old story of Jesus and his love.





♥ TOUCHING BASE WITH PASTOR MICHAEL CHRISTIAN

BY TONY KOH

It was our joy and privilege to touch base with Pastor Michael and his wife Sintha at the ABCs Cells' Quarterly Combined Fellowship in church recently, and to understand how we can partner and support their missions work.

We are glad to note that the orphanage has been successfully running, and positively serving the poor community with Christian love.

Pastor Michael passionately shared that we must put on the lens of Jesus to express our compassion towards the poor and needy, and to bring faith and hope in our Lord Jesus Christ to the children of Nias via the missions work of Tomorrow's Hope ministry. We commit prayerfully to God the following:

- Provision of basic education for the children
- Provision of basic meals
- Nurturing the children in a healthy, hygienic and safe environment

We must cover the ministry work in prayers without ceasing as this is God's work, especially when we are constantly battling against evil forces that seek to rob, steal and kill.



As we are focused to trust and obey, to hear God's Word and act accordingly, our good and faithful God will never fail us.

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

BY MARTIN CHEAH



friends who have got their driving license (after countless attempts) but are too afraid to drive anyway.

THE TOOL (OVERVIEW OF LESSON 1 & 2)

Lesson 1 is the assurance of God's forgiveness by grace through faith. The questions are arranged to lead the new

believer to understand that God's Word is the primary means of grace so that hearers will put their trust in Jesus Christ to save them. The secondary means of grace are the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion to receive forgiveness and life.

Lesson 2 deals with the struggles faced by the new believer caused by the sinful nature. Questions are meant to help those who struggle with sin from their old nature even after being a Christian. Besides our sinful nature, we also face a battle against our spiritual enemies. This lesson teaches the new believer to repent and trust in Jesus who loves them and died for them. (Galatians 2:20)



THE BIG PICTURE

From a 2020 statistical report, Taman Jurong has a population of about 40K and Jurong West about 263K. When God moves even a fraction of this 300K population to join JCC, our pastors will be overwhelmed.

Thus, JCC is embarking on a journey to train CG leaders and Core Team members to be Disciple Makers. The end goal is that every JCCian will be trained to use the Discipleship Manual to disciple (one to one) a new believer in the basics of Christian beliefs from a Lutheran perspective.

THE PLAN

A three-session training on Sunday afternoons was started on 10th April and will complete by 1st May. Conducting the training are Rev Anthony, Rev Fredric and Bro Wong Mui. After the training, the CG leaders will go back to their CGs to train all the members on the 10 topics in the manual in preparation for the Great Harvest. We don't really know when Revelation 14:14-16 will take place but as the slogan goes, "Not IF but WHEN" and we must be ready.

Why learn about Disciple Making when there aren't any new people yet? One reason I can imagine is that since we have learned the skill, we might as well put it into practise. Bro Wong Mui pointed out that Disciple Making includes Evangelism. We are to be fishers of men. I recall about 30 years ago I had no interest in driving because I did not have a driving license. However, once I got my driving license, I bought a car and began driving for more than 20 years before retiring from driving. Of course, I know

WHAT'S NEXT

To most JCCians, these lessons teach what we already know. It is nothing new, only a methodology of how to share our faith with new believers. Pray that God will give us the power and conviction to live out the Great Commandment.



♥ GIRLS' BRIGADE 51ST COMPANY ENROLMENT

(SHUQUN PRIMARY SCHOOL)

BY CAPTAIN YAP XIU ZHEN

It had been a tough two years for the girls to adapt their weekly parades to the constant changes to the Covid-19 Safe Management Measures. Yet, despite the adversity, they took it in their stride and still enjoyed themselves in their activities and continued to learn something new every week.

10th April 2022 was another memorable Sunday for the girls of the GB 51st Coy when we held our annual enrolment service at Jurong Christian Church. With the SMMs in place, we were able to welcome the girls and their families as visitors of the Church. Placing the Company colours in front of the congregation signifies the presence the Girls' Brigade ministry still has in the Church.

The constant prayers and support from the Church were definitely felt by the officers and girls.

We give all glory to God for seeing us safely through the challenging pandemic circumstances. As the Covid-19 is gradually being downgraded to endemic status, with the easing of some rules for group activities, we will continue to explore creative ways to nurture and shape these young girls into future leaders with a heart for God.

A big thank you to all JCC members who have kept The Girls' Brigade ministry in your prayers, God bless!





FIND GODLY COMPANY

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." -- 1 Corinthians 15:33 (NIV)



Bad company corrupts good morals. If we constantly surround ourselves with ungodly people, we risk eroding our Christian values and godly principles.

We are affected by what we eat, what we see and the people we mix with. We are a holy priesthood set apart to live holy lives that are pleasing to God. We are specifically instructed not to mix with wicked and ungodly characters.

Consider how an athlete who desires success maintains a strict regimen in his diet and daily physical routines in addition to following the advice of his coach. He is concerned with the type of food that enters his body, the type of thoughts that enter his mind as well as the type and duration of exercises he engages in.

Most importantly, he listens to his coach and hangs out with like-minded people.

How else do you think we can live godly lives without maintaining godly disciplines with the help of godly company?

What does God say about this?

- *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*
- Hebrews 10:24,25 (NIV)
- *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers.*
- Psalm 1:1 (NIV)
- *Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.*
- Proverbs 15:22 (NIV)

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICAL LIVING?

No man is an island. We cannot survive alone, let alone grow well in our spiritual life. We need to purposefully consider the type of companionship that we should pursue. Seek out people who can help to strengthen and deepen our faith in God and our personal relationship with him. Participate in activities and events that allow us not only to receive blessings but also to bless others with kind

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acts and wholesome talk done with God's love.

At different life stages, we may need different types of company to seek advice and guidance from, relating to life choices and obedience to God's calling for our lives. Young people may need advice regarding their pursuit of studies or boy-girl relationships. Young adults may need advice on marriage and child-raising. Older adults may need guidance in health maintenance or retirement plans. As such, it is not enough to simply avoid ungodly company. Instead, we

should actively seek godly company for wise counsel in considering plans and decisions for our life situations.

REFLECT AND RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

1. What type of company are you spending most of your time with? Why?
2. How are they affecting your faith in God and your relationship with God?
3. Identify a few persons from whom you can seek godly counsel and take actions to engage with them regularly.

LET'S THINK & TALK STRAIGHT

BY BRYAN TAY

*"A son honors his father, and a slave his master.
If I am a father, where is the honor due me?
If I am a master, where is the respect due me?" says the LORD Almighty."
Malachi 1:6*



God created us in His image to have fellowship with Him. But we sinned. So, He took the initiative to redeem us from eternal damnation and separation from Him by sending Jesus to die for our sins.

By that great act of love as a loving Father, He has reconciled us to Himself so that we can continue to enjoy His goodness and lay claim to our inheritance in Christ (have you discovered it yet?). But we continue to spurn Him by ignoring Him and giving Him scant attention and importance in our daily lives, in our decisions and activities, even as Christians. Why?

Why does God not matter much to you?

*Are you happily playing
in Satan's worldly playpens?*

Let us not fool ourselves. We will reap what we sow. Please do not foolishly say that you are prepared for the consequences of your disobedience (start reading the Bible seriously and you will never dare to say that again).

Remember that God is also a God of wrath. Yes, He is always willing to forgive when we confess our sins and turn away from evil. But He will also punish the sinful and evil acts with ensuing consequences.

Read the Bible and look at how He punished Israel in days of old. May God help us to persevere when He disciplines us, because He loves us too much to let us rot in Satan's worldly playpens.

GOD IS ASKING

- What are you seeking to achieve in life more than being faithful and obedient to Me?
- Who are you seeking favour with more than with Me?
- Am I not ALL-SUFFICIENT for you?

I welcome your comments, thoughts and sharing on this reflection. Write to jccwinepress@gmail.com and we'll publish your contribution in the next issue.

AΩ ALPHA TO THE OMEGA

BY SAMUEL CHONG 



J is for JUDAS MACCABEUS

"When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'" (Matthew 11:2-3)

WHO WAS JUDAS MACCABEUS?

Judas Maccabeus (unknown-160 BC) was a Jewish priest who led the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire and restored Jewish worship at the Temple in Jerusalem in 164 BC. The Maccabean Revolt was the first reassertion of Jewish independence since the fall of the Southern Kingdom of Judah to Babylon in 586 BC (2 Kings 25).



An imaginary depiction of Judas Maccabeus by Guillaume Rouillé, 1553

THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

The Intertestamental Period refers to the roughly 400 years between the Old and New Testaments and is popularly known among Protestants as the "400 Silent Years" as God did not speak and no new prophets were raised. However,

this period saw many significant events taking place that were not recorded in the Bible but alluded to in earlier prophecies (Daniel 2:31-43, 11:1-35).

The Achaemenid (i.e. Persian) Empire established by Cyrus the Great (2 Chronicles 22-23) was conquered by Alexander the Great in 330 BC. When Alexander died in 323 BC, his vast empire was divided among his generals into what became known as Greek successor states. Judea initially came under the rule of the Ptolemaic Kingdom (based in Egypt) but fell to the rival

Seleucid Empire (based in Syria) around 200 BC.

Alexander's conquests introduced Greek culture and ideas into the Middle East, a process of cultural change known as Hellenization that lasted for centuries. Hellenism gained favour among many Jews, especially those of the urban upper class. As a result, many Jews learned Greek and adopted dual Greek-Hebrew names (e.g. Simon Peter, Thomas Didymus). The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) was also produced during this period.



Extent of the Seleucid Empire up to 60 BC by 'Arab Hafez', Wikimedia Commons

"GOD MANIFEST" AND THE MACCABEAN REVOLT

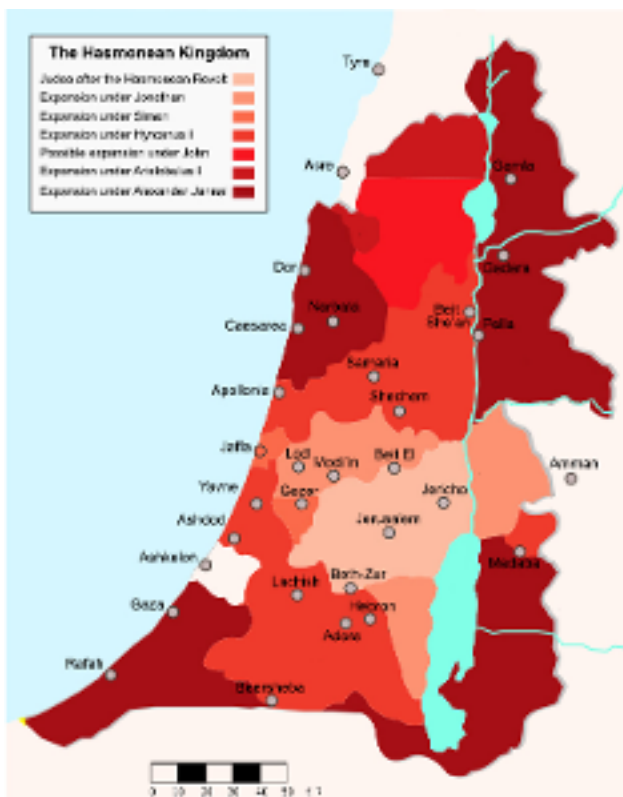
Antiochus IV ascended to the Seleucid throne in 175 BC during a power vacuum and was seen by many to be a usurper. He cultivated a reputation as an extravagant and generous ruler but became increasingly eccentric – he was known to unexpectedly appear in public bathhouses among

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the common people. His title was Epiphanies ("God Manifest"), which his detractors seized upon to call him Epimanes ("The Mad") instead.

The Ptolemies and Seleucids viewed Jewish culture favourably and protected Jewish institutions such as the Temple. Antiochus IV reversed this policy, likely due to a dispute over the office of the High Priest, which he viewed as his prerogative to appoint and dismiss at will.

This was contrary to traditional Jewish belief that the High Priest was divinely appointed. Infighting and intrigue ensued between the Hellenistic and Traditionalist factions. Antiochus now intervened in favour of the Hellenistic faction (who were pro-Seleucid), outlawing many traditional Jewish practices, including the offering of sacrifices at the Temple.



The Hasmonean Kingdom at different stages of its expansion by 'Effib', Wikimedia Commons

Some sources state that he installed a statue of Zeus in the Temple, making it the site of a syncretic Greek-Jewish cult and polluting it in the sight of Traditionalist Jews.

Antiochus' antagonism of the Traditionalist Jews led to a revolt in 167 BC by Mattathias, a Jewish

priest from a rural part of Judea.

As Mattathias died the next year, his son Judas took over the leadership. Judas led Jewish dissidents in a guerrilla campaign in the Judean countryside against Hellenistic Jews, earning him the epithet "Maccabee" (from the Hebrew word for "Hammer"), which became used to describe the insurgents in general.

As the Maccabees gained strength and momentum, a full-scale revolt against the Seleucids broke out. At that time, Antiochus IV was away in Babylonia to quell an uprising and left commanders behind to deal with the Maccabees.

When the Maccabees won a substantial victory at the Battle of Emmaus, the Seleucids deployed a large army against them.

However, Antiochus died of disease while still in Babylonia and the Seleucids called off their countercampaign. Internal Seleucid infighting also prompted Seleucid commanders to offer a political compromise with the Maccabees, restoring their religious freedom.

The Maccabees entered Jerusalem in triumph in 164 BC and conducted a ritual cleansing of the Temple, re-establishing traditional Jewish worship there. The annual Jewish festival of Hanukkah celebrates the recovery of Jerusalem and the rededication of the Temple by the Maccabees.

FROM REVOLT TO INDEPENDENCE - THE HASMONEAN KINGDOM

The retaking of Jerusalem did not put an end to the conflict. While the Revolt was initially seen as a war for religious freedom to end Seleucid oppression, some Maccabees wanted to continue fighting to expand their control.

At the same time, Demetrius I Soter, nephew of Antiochus IV, seized the Seleucid throne and appointed a Hellenistic Jew as High Priest. Demetrius renewed the Seleucid offensive against the Maccabees, leading Judas to sign a treaty of friendship with the rising Roman Republic, which was looking to expand eastwards and hence keen to undermine Greek control.

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The Triumph of Judas Maccabeus by Peter Paul Rubens, c.1635

Judas' death in battle in 160 BC rallied the Jews to renewed resistance. The Revolt was continued by Judas' brothers Jonathan and Simon, who took advantage of Seleucid infighting to consolidate control over the countryside.

After Jonathan was imprisoned and executed by the Seleucids, Simon became High Priest and Prince of Israel in 142 BC by popular acclamation, establishing the Hasmonean Kingdom that ruled semi-autonomously under Seleucid suzerainty. The Roman-Hasmonean alliance was reaffirmed, and the Roman Senate accorded the Hasmoneans recognition in 139 BC.

The Hasmonean Kingdom gained power and autonomy as the Seleucid Empire entered a period of collapse around 110 BC under pressure from Rome and Parthia (i.e. Persia). It also expanded into neighbouring regions like Samaria. Nonetheless, the Hasmonean Kingdom did not break from Greek culture and language, choosing to continue a blend of Jewish and Greek traditions.

Hasmonean independence only lasted about 50 years however, for in 63 BC the Roman Republic under Pompey invaded Judea and turned it into a Roman client state; Pompey's invasion also ended the Seleucid Empire. After a brief period of autonomy after the deaths of Pompey (48 BC) and Julius Caesar (44 BC), the Hasmonean Kingdom was overthrown by Herod I in 37 BC with heavy Roman support. Herod's claim to be "King of the Jews" was supported by Octavian (the future Emperor Augustus) and Marc Antony (Octavian's rival and lover of Cleopatra), and he ruled as the Roman client king of Judea until shortly after the birth of Christ (Matthew 2:1, 19-20).

SIDENOTE: THE BOOKS OF THE MACCABEES AND THE APOCRYPHA

While the history of the Maccabean Revolt was recorded by historians, many other details, especially that of Judas Maccabeus, were expounded in several Books of Maccabees. 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees are considered as canonical scripture by the Catholic and Orthodox churches but not by Protestants, on the basis that they are not part of the Tanakh (i.e. the Hebrew Bible). Lutherans and most Protestants consider fourteen books from the Intertestamental Period (including 1 and 2 Maccabees) as Apocrypha – books that are not considered equal to divinely-inspired Scripture and thus cannot be used to establish doctrine, but are nonetheless useful and good to read for ethical/devotional matters.

JUDAS MACCABEUS IN LITERATURE AND MUSIC

As a warrior-hero and national liberator, Judas Maccabeus inspired many writers, artists, and composers. In his Divine Comedy, Dante Alighieri placed Judas in Heaven with other "heroes of the true faith".

George Frideric Handel, famous for the "Hallelujah Chorus", also composed the Judas Maccabeus oratorio (a large musical composition for orchestra, choir, and soloists) in 1746 based on Judas' leadership of the Maccabean Revolt. This was ironically devised as a compliment to the British government's quelling of a major

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domestic rebellion.

“THOUGH THE PEOPLE COULDN'T SEE WHAT MESSIAH OUGHT TO BE”

Judas Maccabeus and the Maccabean Revolt reasserted Jewish autonomy and paved the way for the short-lived Hasmonean Kingdom. As such, Jewish nationalism and desire for independence continued under Roman rule. As the line goes in Michael Card's signature song El Shaddai, the Jews of Jesus' day had a very different notion of what the long-awaited Messiah would do. They wanted a military leader who would free Israel from Roman rule and restore the Davidic kingdom (Acts 1:6). These ideas and sentiments were very much influenced by the exploits of Judas Maccabeus.

However, Jesus' First Coming was for a very different reason – to die for the sins of the world,

reconciling Man with God and granting salvation (Romans 5:10). This lack of overt political action disappointed many Jews, even John the Baptist (Matthew 11:2-3).

In spite of Christ and His stated mission, Jewish nationalism continued to foment, leading to a series of Jewish-Roman wars in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD including the Siege of Jerusalem and destruction of Herod's Temple in 70 AD (as predicted by Jesus in Mark 13:1-2). The defeat of the Jewish revolts against Rome subsequently scattered many Jews across the Roman Empire, contributing to the growth of the Jewish Diaspora.

The impact and legacy of Judas Maccabeus hence shows that having an understanding the Intertestamental Period will provide modern-day Christians with the historical and literary context for the New Testament.

TIMELINE OF MAJOR MILESTONES

Year	Event
586 BC	Fall of the Southern Kingdom of Judah to Babylon
539 BC	Fall of Babylon to the Achaemenid (i.e. Persian) Empire
330 BC	Fall of the Achaemenid Empire to Alexander the Great
323 BC	Death of Alexander the Great
c.200 BC	Judea falls under Seleucid control
175 BC	Antiochus IV ascends the Seleucid throne
167 BC	Start of the Maccabean Revolt
164 BC	Judas Maccabeus recovers Jerusalem and rededicates the Temple
142 BC	Hasmonean Kingdom established under Simon Thassi
63 BC	Pompey's invasion of Judea; Fall of the Seleucid Empire
37 BC	Herod overthrows the Hasmonean Kingdom with backing from Octavian
27 BC	Octavian (Augustus) becomes Emperor; Start of the Roman Empire
c.4 BC	Birth of Christ
c.30 AD	Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ
70 AD	Roman Siege of Jerusalem; Destruction of Herod's Temple
136 AD	Bar Kokhba Revolt suppressed by Rome; Growth of Jewish Diaspora

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Depiction of Judas Maccabeus in Die Bibel in Bildern (Picture Bible) by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 1860



Let's see what you remember!

<< Click on the image to access the short quiz.

All information and images taken from the respective Wikipedia pages unless otherwise stated. For further reading, do check out the following Wikipedia articles:

1. *Judas Maccabeus*
2. *Antiochus IV Epiphanies*
3. *Maccabees*
4. *Maccabean Revolt*
5. *Hasmonean Dynasty*



SPREADING THE GOSPEL – COVID STYLE

BY MARTIN CHEAH

From a concept suggested by an article by Rachel Bomberger: Viral Evangelism: Lessons from a Pandemic

It originated from an unknown little city in one part of the world and within months it spread throughout the whole world.

Now two years later, everyone has heard of the coronavirus. We could learn the lessons on the spread of COVID-19 and apply it to spreading the Gospel.

1. YOU CAN'T SPREAD WHAT YOU DON'T HAVE

If you don't have COVID-19, you cannot spread it, obviously. The same can be said of the Gospel. You cannot share the Good News about Jesus Christ if you have not caught the Good News yourself.

How do you share the Gospel with others? One way is to write down your own testimony on how you came to Jesus.

continued on the next page

2. SELF-ISOLATION AND SOCIAL DISTANCING PREVENTS SPREAD

We all know that to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we must keep away from people. Similarly, if you just remain a recluse at home or exclusively meet with only your CG members, then you avoid spreading the Good News.

To spread the Gospel, we need to be where the people are; like Paul, whenever he entered a new city, he went to synagogues and public forums, to temple courts and “places of prayer.”

3. LONG EXPOSURE – GREATER POTENTIAL OF SPREAD

If you wear a mask and walk around the streets, it is unlikely that you will catch the COVID-19 virus. Only when you stop, remove your mask and chat with an infected person are you likely to catch the virus. Psalm 1 mentions walk, stand and sit as potential ways that we keep company or associate with people.

So, long-term relationships offer more opportunities to witness to the work of Jesus than one-off interactions. We have to consider friendship evangelism, reaching out to our circle of friends and relations.

4. SYMPTOMATIC SPREAD BEATS ASYMPTOMATIC

When you cough or sneeze in the MRT, the other passengers will be immediately observant of you with your outward signs of infection. If you are a UC (Undercover Christian), your lifestyle may

affect your witness.

People cannot see the Christ in you and you may find that your evangelistic efforts have been robbed of much of their potency. You are like a lamp under a bowl; instead put it on its stand, and let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

5. COVERING MOUTHS HINDERS SPREAD

We all know about the rules relating to wearing masks to prevent spread of COVID-19. Similarly, are we tempted to filter out the Gospel from our speech — or even to keep our mouths shut altogether? We present only a muffled witness to the world when we talk about God but our tongues stumble over the name of Jesus Christ and the story of His atoning death and resurrection.

In April, the borders are opening up and the masks are coming off. May we throw off the masks that hinder our witness and join the saints in the prayer Luke recorded for us in Acts 4:29: “And now, Lord ... grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.”

CONCLUSION

May we, in our daily lives, use our growing knowledge of how viruses work to help and support our neighbours in every spiritual need, that they, like us, would know the perfect and everlasting joy of life in Christ.

Let's Bring Back the Community

In view of relaxed Covid measures, Jurong Christian Church encourages all members to regularly engage in ongoing fellowship online or in-person.

Online Portal

Login to the **social portal in jcc.sg** and curate your bible study or interest group. Our digital nomads are welcome to utilise our platforms to reach out to friends, who can freely join too!





THE PASSION OF CHRIST

MARCH CROSSWORD PUZZLE SOLUTION

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ACROSS

3. The hill just outside of Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified. (Mt 27:33)
4. Jesus was crucified at the time of this Jewish Feast.
6. Roman governor of Judaea who authorized the crucifixion of Jesus.
7. Caiaphas' servant whose right ear was cut off by Simon Peter. (John 18:10)
10. This event happened and destroyed the temple after Jesus' death.
12. They ordered Jesus' tomb to be made secure until the 3rd day. (Mt 27:64)
14. The disciple who betrayed Jesus. (Mt 27:3-5)
15. Here, Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights. (Mt 4:1-2 NIV)

DOWN

1. He asked Jesus: "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" (Luke 24:18)
2. Jesus was arrested at this garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives.
- 5 Another name for Golgotha. (Lk 23:33 KJV)
8. Jesus was charged for this crime.
9. Number of times Peter denied Jesus before the rooster crowed. (Mk 14:72)
11. An apostle of Jesus who doubted Jesus' resurrection. (John 20:25),
13. After the resurrection Jesus met two of his disciples while they were on their way to this village and discussing what had happened. (Lk 24:13-35)