CLASS: SS 2 TERM: 3rd

TOPIC: **Signs of Jesus**

In our first term, we treated miracles, and so, this topic is not new to us. We for sure have understood and have some basic knowledge of it as far as the scheme permits. Essentially, miracles are how God shows and manifests His powers and Divinity, demonstrating that He has transcended the limitations of nature in space and time. He has the power to manifest Himself without resorting to miracles.

Under this topic, as instructed by the scheme, we are going the look at the story of Lazarus

**Who was Lazarus?**

Not so much is known about Lazarus. He was born in Bethany (present-day West Bank in Palestine), and he died in the year 30 AD. He was a brother to Mary and Martha, and he was also a good friend to Jesus, whom He loved. When he died, he death touched Jesus when he heard of it.

**Raising of Lazarus (Jn 11: 1 – 44)**

Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is one of the many miracles He did. It deals with one of life’s most devastating events—death. The pain and hopelessness brought by death a problem that everyone faces. Death causes fear and pain, and it is something we do not have control over. In this topic, Jesus does the impossible by raising someone back to life. In the story of Lazarus, we see how Jesus overcomes death and brings hope.

**Lazarus was dead**

Lazarus had already died and stayed for four days before Jesus went to their place. But when Mary sought Jesus, He did not bring Lazarus back to life right away—He wanted to be with the people first. When He saw Mary, and the Jews who were with her weeping, Jesus was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled (John 11:33). The pain of losing a loved one was real, but Jesus’ comfort was just as genuine. How did Jesus show His compassion while the people were mourning (John 11:35)?

**Jesus brought Lazarus back to Life**

Jesus did not just raise Lazarus back to life as soon as he had been pronounced dead. He waited four days to do this. The Jews believed that it was impossible to bring someone back to life after four days of being in the tomb. However, Jesus was able to do the impossible—He brought Lazarus back to life. By a word from Jesus, “Lazarus, come out,” Lazarus was resurrected. Jesus unbound Lazarus from the tomb and gave him life. In this passage, we see God’s glory—His victory over hopelessness and death—displayed. Why do you think Jesus brought Lazarus back to life this way?

He was able to bring Lazarus back to life because Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live...”* JOHN 11:25. When Lazarus was resurrected from the dead, the people who saw him were amazed. Through this miracle, the truth was revealed: eternal life is found in Jesus alone. Though everyone faces the reality of physical death, through faith in Jesus, we do not need to fear death. Those who have put their faith in Christ will be resurrected and will live forever in God’s presence. It is also through this miracle that Jesus brings hope, no matter how difficult or impossible the situation. Only He is able and has the authority to speak life to the areas of our lives that have run dry and may even be dead.

In the seventh sign, Jesus reveals Himself as the only living hope amidst fear, pain, and death. The promise of eternal life and hope brought by Jesus remains true for us today. Together, even as we face the reality of death, let’s trust Jesus to give us life for all eternity. Let us also believe that God can resurrect the areas in our lives that have run dry.

TOPIC: **LOVE**

**God’s love for man (Jn 3: 16 – 18)**

Love is one of the concepts that has today been misinterpreted, misused, and misapplied. Its wrong interpretation has given rise to so many vices in our society today so much so that some feel that the concept of love sends the wrong signal.

There are several definitions of to love; however, if any of them is not pointing towards God who is the source of love, then it is not love. Love in a simple definition, *is to will the good of the other person*.

**Types of love**

There are so many types of love, but we shall consider four

***Eros (passionate love)***

Eros is centered on what we see, touch, feel, and taste. It includes romance, passion, and attraction. It describes the intoxicating and thrilling emotions that the initial [stages of a relationship](https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/stages-of-a-relationship) can induce. "Relationships often begin with passion, including infatuation and [attraction](https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/types-of-attraction).

***Pragma (enduring love)***

Pragma is sometimes translated to practical love, referencing the kind of love grounded in duty, [commitment](https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/commitment-issues), and practicality. This is the love you see in long-standing relationships and life partnerships—like when you see an old couple that's been

together for decades and decades.

***Philia (deep friendship)***

Philia is the love that develops over a [deep, long-lasting friendship](https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/exactly-how-many-hours-it-takes-to-create-lasting-friendship). It's platonic, but you feel very close to those you have philia toward and can confide in them, trust them, and respect them on a very personal level.

***Agape (universal love)***

Agape is selfless love, like the kind you might associate with saintly figures like Mother Teresa. This love is compassionate for everyone, also known as universal loving-kindness. It's the love you feel for all living things without exception. The love you extend knowingly without expectations for anything in return. It's a very pure and conscious love. It's similar to what we sometimes refer to as [unconditional love](https://www.mindbodygreen.com/articles/understanding-unconditional-love).

Our scheme is not to discuss love in detail but rather God’s love for us. It was however important to explain love and some of its types to able us to understand clearly what love means as a concept. From the above clarification, we shall see the kind of love God wants of us and the love he shows us.

God’s love for man started from the creation of the world. Man was the only creature God created in His image. When He created man, He gave man domination over all other creatures. God, in His deep love for man, sent His only son Jesus Christ into the world to die and shed his blood to save man from sin and for man to gain eternal life. The gospel of John summarizes this as follows: “For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God”. (John3:16–18) The love of God for man is unconditional; He loves man despite his singular nature. He made provision through His Son for their redemption from sin. Very clearly, we see that God teaches us to love unconditionally, without discrimination. That is agape love. Love is meant to return us to God. Anything called love that takes you away from God is not love.

 **John’s message of love for one another (Jn 13: 34-35, 15: 12 – 13)**

John who is known as disciple of love writes:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” For John, you cannot claim you love God without loving your neighbor unconditionally.

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who doesn’t not love does not know God; for God is love” (1John4:7–8) If anyone claims to love God but hates another, such one is far from knowing God because God’s nature is love.

St. Paul also said; that if one has the gifts of the Holy Spirit but does not have love for others, he is a noise maker. He listed the attributes of love as follows; Patience, kindness, humility, selfishness, accommodation, righteousness, trust, and endurance. Gifts of the Spirit such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, and knowledge will all pass away but love does not end.

TOPIC: **The Ascension, the Holy Spirit, and the Mission**

**The Ascension**

The ascension of Christ is an affirmation that He came from above. Ascension speaks to the fact that He descended and will ascend. Christ’s Ascension is the entrance of Jesus’ humanity into heaven. He ascended body and soul into heaven.

**Acts 1: 6 – 11**

Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

**The Pentecost**

The name comes from the Greek word pentekoste which means fiftieth. The holiday is celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter which is also fifty days after Easter, hence the name. Since its date depends on the date of Easter, Pentecost is a moveable feast, that is, the date is not fixed. It commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and other followers (about 120 of them) of Jesus Christ while they were in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Weeks. They were all together praying. This important event in the Christian faith is described in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:1–31), the fifth book of the New Testament of the Bible.

**Acts 2: 1 – 14**

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.

And at this sound, the multitude came together, and they were bewildered because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

 And they were amazed and wondered, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?

 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his native language?

 Parthians and Medes and E'lamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

 Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

Significance

Christians should continue the preaching of the Word

Pentecost marked the beginning of the church

Pentecost has given us the courage to preach the good news without any fear

**TOPIC: Fellowship in the Early Church**

**Communal living in the early church (acts 1: 15 – 26, 2: 41 – 47, 4: 32 32 – 37)**

**Peter’s speech and Judas' replacement**

In those days Peter stood up among the brethren (the company of persons was in all about a hundred and twenty), and said, “Brethren, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David, concerning Judas who was guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry. (Now this man bought a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%201&version=RSV#fen-RSV-26924b)] he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the field was called in their language Akel′dama, that is, Field of Blood.) For it is written in the book of Psalms,

‘Let his habitation become desolate,
and let there be no one to live in it’; and ‘His office let another take.’

So, one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.”And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, “Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two thou hast chosento take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside, to go to his place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles.

**Communal life (Acts 4: 32 – 37)**

Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power, the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was soldand laid it at the apostles’ feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need. Thus, Joseph who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means, Son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles’ feet

**PROBLEMS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

Like any other organization of human beings, the joy and communal living among the brethren gave way to human weaknesses and problems. In the early church dishonesty (Ananias and Sapphira), and discrimination (Rich and the poor, Jews and the Gentiles) th came in to destroy the spirit of the fellowship but was quickly stopped by the apostles. The case of Ananias and Sapphira was a case study. They lied upon the Holy Spirit; they died a shameful death.

**The story of Ananias and Sapphira (Act 5:1-11)**

A man named Ananias with his wife Sapphira (members of the early Christian Church in Jerusalem) sold a piece of property, and with his wife’s knowledge, he kept back some of the proceeds and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.

After about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.” And she said, “Yes, for so much.” But Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Hark, the feet of those that have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” Immediately she fell at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things.

**Solutions to Problems in the Early Church (Acts 6: 1 – 6)**

In those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables.
 “Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;
“but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word.”
 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,
 whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.
 Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.
Acts 6:1-7

**The Church was growing.** No longer was it just a movement among the local Jewish population. Greeks were now joining the Church. The widows among the Greeks were being neglected in the daily provisions of tables of food that the Church provided for the widows.

The leaders had to decide what to do.
They brought the whole group together.
They decided to choose seven men to be responsible for this task.
The qualifications were clear and rigorous.

**1. They are to be men**

**2. Of good reputation**

**3. Full of faith**

**4. Full of the Holy Spirit**

**5. Full of wisdom**

**6. They were accepted by the group of believers**

**7. They “ordained” – appointed them by laying on of hands**

The apostles will continually give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.
There were now in the Church:

**1. Deacons of the Word – food for the soul and spirit.**

**2. Deacons of the tables of distribution – food for the body.**

**3. This pleased the whole Church**

**4. The Word of God spread**

**5. The number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem,**

**6. A great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.**

**Curiously, as some Bible students have observed, the men chosen have Greek names.** Why would that be? The Church placed men in responsible positions who would have a heart for those who were being neglected. That would send a message that we care for those who are disadvantaged and we will place sensitive men in their care.

This does not mean that no women were involved. We do not know but the process of “serving tables” of food would require much work and many people would likely be involved.

TOPIC: **Opposing to the gospel message (Acts 4: 1-31, 5:17 – 42, 6: 8-15, 7: 1-16, 9: 1-2, 12: 1 – 24)**

After the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, attempts by the apostles to spread the gospel met with stiff resistance from the Jewish religious authorities, the chief priests, and the Sanhedrin. Some of the technical employed by these people to frustrate the spread of the gospel included arrest, fake trials, imprisonment, persecution, and killing. Some of these wicked techniques were used in dealing with the apostles, but the more they tried to stop them, the more the apostles succeeded until Christianity was established all over the world.

**The Arrest of Peter and John (Acts 4:1 – 31)**

After Peter and John healed the lame man at the temple gate, the people gathered in amazement and Peter and John preached to them in the same of Jesus. These teachings annoyed the priest, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. For this reason, they arrested them and put them in custody. The following day the elders, the scribes, Annas the high priest, Caialhae, Alexander, and all the high-priestly family gathered and brought Peter and John into their midst to try them. They asked for the source of the power with which they did what they had done.
Peter filled with the Holy Spirit, defended their action and declared that they performed the miracles through the power in the name of Jesus Christ whom they had crucified but whom God raised from the dead. He referred to Jesus as the stone which –the builders rejected but has become the head of the corner. Only through him the salvation of man is assured, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they wondered greatly because they noted that though, the disciples were uneducated and common men, they had been with Jesus Christ. The authorities saw that the man whom Peter and John had healed was standing there with them, so they did nothing against them. They ordered them out so that they could confer with one another. They finally decided to charge the men not to speak in the name of Jesus anymore to prevent the further spreading of Christianity among the people.

When John and Peter were told this, they responded by asking them whether it was right in the sight of God to listen to them or God. The authorities further threatened them and then released them. Peter and John afterward reported the incident to the church. The congregation prayed to God for more strength and power to face the opposition from the authorities. After the prayer, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they preached the gospel with boldness and more signs were done by them.

Significance

The arrest of Peter and John was prompted by the commotion that came as a result of healing the man who was lame. Peter’s address equally disturbed the worship in the temple. Because the captain of the temple was responsible for maintaining law and order in the temple, he had to arrest Peter and John. Again, the Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, they believed that the teaching of the apostles contradicted their belief and, as such, they felt threatened.

**The Arrest and Trial of the Apostles (Acts 5:17 – 42)**

As the apostles continued to spread the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit, the high priest and his men got the apostles arrested and put them in prison out of jealousy. There, in the prison, the angel of the Lord released them and said to them, “Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of His life”. The apostles did exactly as the angel directed them. When the Sanhedrin met, they sent for the apostles in prison but they were not there. Later, an informant told them that the apostles were in the temple, preaching. Because of the people in the temple, they were brought gently without violence. When the men were brought to the Sanhedrin, the high priest questioned them saying:
“We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us”.

Peter and the apostles replied:

“We must obey God rather than men. That God our Father raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we witness to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.” (Acts 5:30 – 32)
The response of the apostles enraged them, and they wanted to kill the apostles. A Pharisee in the council, Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, held in honour of our people, stood up and ordered them to be put outside for a while. Then he advised;

Men of Israel, take care what you do with these men. For before these days, Theudas arose, giving himself out to be somebody and a number of men, about four hundred joined him; but he was slain and all who followed him were dispersed and come to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean arose in the days of Census and drew away some of the people after him; he also perished and all who followed him scattered. So, in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or undertaking is of men it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; you might even be found opposing God’ (Acts 5:35 – 39). The council took to his advice. When they called in the men, they beat them and before they left them, they warned them not to speak in the same of Jesus again. The apostles left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus.

**Different Types of Opposition Confronting the Church Today**

i. In some parts of the country and even in some schools, Christians are not allowed to preach publicly.

ii. Also, Church buildings are not allowed in some parts of the country.

iii. Christians suffer open persecution thereby leading to wanton destruction of lives and property.

iv. There is discrimination against Christians in employment opportunities and promotions in public service

v. Christians are discriminated against in marriages and funeral ceremonies.

vi. In some cases, Christians are denied the freedom of worship and religious holidays.

**The Death of Stephen (Acts 6:8 – 15; 7:1 – 60)**

Stephen was one of the seven deacons selected to carry out the daily distribution of food and ensure the welfare of the less privileged people in the early church. Stephen was full of grace and power, he performed great wonders and signs among the people. Some of the Jews could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke. Consequently, these men secretly insighted men who brought false accusations against him.

 **The accusations were as follows;**

i. That he blasphemed against Moses, the law and God,

ii. That he claimed Jesus would destroy the temple.
These accusations by Jewish law constituted serious offence punishable by death.
When Stephen was arraigned before the council, he surprised them by failing to refute the allegation. He decided to trace the history of the Jews to show that they had been noted for persecuting the prophets of God. He referred to them as stiff-necked people, uncircumcised my heart and ears. This statement angered the people the more. Based on this, they dragged him outside the city and stoned him to death.

**Significance And Lessons to Learn**

1. Stephen was killed based on false accusations. Therefore, present-day evangelists should know that the same fate awaits them at all times. They should therefore pray always for God’s guidance and protection.
2. The successful arrest, trial, and killing of Stephen encouraged the Jews to embark on mass persecution of the Christians and, consequently, many of them were killed, but that did not stop the spreading of the gospel.

 iii The persecution of the Christians made them run various places, and as they went, they kept on preaching the gospel that led to widespread Christianity. An example of this is Philip’s action and movement to Samaria and the conversion of the people in Samaria.

iv. Persecution is part of the heritage of Christians, and they should not be encouraged by such things; rather, persecution should make them strong in their faith.

v. The stoning of Stephen helped to introduce Saul, who later became Paul the apostle to the Gentiles.

**Saul’s Opposition to the Gospel (Acts 9:1 – 2)**

Saul was a young man born in Tarsus. He was educated in Jerusalem and he studied law under the great teacher, Gamaliel. The Roman name of Saul was Paul. He was among the Pharisees who persecuted the early Christians, and Stephen was killed under his supervision.
After the death of Stephen, he went from house to house in Jerusalem arresting and dragging Christians out of their homes and taking them prisoners. Thus, Saul succeeded in killing many Christians.

Most of the Christians fled from Jerusalem and went to places such as Judea, Samaria and Damascus among others. Saul went to the high priest and obtained a letter to go to Damascus and arrest the Christians.

**Significance and Lessons to Learn**

1. Saul engaged in the persecution of the Christians because he was ignorant of the gospel. He thought he was working for God, but when his eyes were opened, he understood the gospel and became more zealous than the apostles. Many people today are in this category. Due to their ignorance, they engage in criticism and gossips against the children of God. People should be very careful of what they do and what they say, particularly when they do not understand it very well.
2. God arrested Saul’s spirit and converted him. God is ever ready to accept anybody, regardless of his atrocities, once he has changed and confessed. Christians should endeavour to leave their bad ways and turn unto God.

**Herod’s Persecution of the Christians (Acts 12:1 24)**

Herod Agrippa was very violent in his opposition to the gospel. The Herods were not Jews, but were appointed by the Roman Empire to rule the Jews, and the Jews did not like their system of leadership. Herod, therefore, did everything possible to win the confidence of the Jews. When Herod Agrippa realised that the Jewish council was opposed to the spread of the Church, he joined in the persecution of the Christians just to please the Jews. When he killed James, the brother of John, he discovered that it pleased the Jews who hated the Christians. He then proceeded to arrest Peter. Herod put Peter in prison, waiting for the feast of unleavened bread and the Passover to pass before he could kill him.

The night before the day Herod planned to kill Peter, Peter was sleeping bound between two soldiers. The angel of the Lord appeared to Peter and said, “Dress yourself and put on your sandals.” And he obeyed. The angel also commanded him to wrap his mantle and follow him. Peter followed the angel through the first gate and when they came to the iron gate leading to the city; it opened without any effort by them. They went out and immediately, the angel left him.
All this while, Peter thought he was seeing vision and it was after the angel left him that he realized it was the angel of the Lord that came to rescue him. Peter then went straight to Mary’s house where some Christians had gathered to pray for him. When Herod could not understand the mystery behind Peter’s escape from prison, he was furious that he executed the prison guards. Later, Herod himself was killed by the angel of God because he refused to glorify God for the gift of oration. He was eaten up by worms and the Word of God continued to grow and multiply.

**Significance and Lessons to Learn**

1. It is very important to note that it was the stiff opposition the early Christians faced that acted as the necessary ingredient in the spread of the gospel.
2. The boldness and courage of the Christians then were enhanced by the Holy Spirit.

TOPIC: **Mission to the Gentiles**

**Conversion of Saul (Acts 9 1 – 30)**