

OLD CHURCHES OF THE WORLD

There is always an awe of mystery, whether it is the history, the architecture or just the miracles and stories associated with old churches. Recently, an excavation on the Megiddo prison grounds in Israel revealed a mosaic and remains of a building that may be the oldest church in the world so far discovered.



Picture on left is the Mosaic found at Megiddo prison , Israel. The mosaic has Greek inscriptions, geometric patterns and a medallion with a fish design. The structure is a rectangular building, one lacking characteristics of churches. This may have been a private home because the Roman Empire prohibited public Christian rituals prior to 300 AD. Other churches dating back from around this period are the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the Nativity in Bethlehem, and the Alonei Mamre near Hebron. However, they contain only scant remains of the original structures, which were built by Emperor Constantine I.

The oldest church in India is believed to be the Palayur Church in Trichur district, Kerala. It is one of the seven churches that St. Thomas established in India and stands on the same spot where the Apostle first established it in AD 54. The original church continued to exist for many centuries. The wooden walls of the church were destroyed in time. In 1607 the Italian Jesuit Fr. Fienuos enclosed the original church with a new outer building. The original altar consecrated by St. Thomas still remains at this site. St. Mary's Church in Niranam, Kerala is another old church built at the same site where St. Thomas established a church. According to the records the present building is the fourth that was built in 1912 and renovated in 2000. There are granite pillars and carvings of various shapes lying around, which were



parts of the previous church. The tall, granite cross in front of the building dates back to the 1259 AD. This church is part of our denomination.

Palayur Church and altar, Palyur

St. Mary's Church

Granite cross, Niranam

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Special points of interest:

- * St. George Perunal May 6th
- * Mothers Day May 13th.
- * Pentecost May 27th.
- * Memorial Day May 28th.

HUMOR

Kids In Church

A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin 5, and Ryan 3. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. "If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait.' Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus!"

A father was at the beach with his children when the four-year-old son ran up to him, grabbed his hand, and led him to the shore where a seagull lay dead in the sand. "Daddy, what happened to him?" the son asked. "He died and went to Heaven," the Dad replied. The boy thought a moment and then said, "Did God throw him back down?"

A wife invited some people to dinner. At the table, she turned to their six-year-old daughter and said, "Would you like

to say the blessing?" "I wouldn't know what to say," the girl replied. "Just say what you hear Mommy say," the wife answered. The daughter bowed her head and said, "Lord, why on earth did I invite all these people to dinner?"



CALENDAR

Young Adult Meeting:
Call and coordinate Mr. Kirk Edwards for next meeting.

Martha Mariam Samajam: Meeting will be held at Church on Sunday May 13th and 20th.

Sunday School:
Sunday June 3rd: Sunday School Final Exam begins.

Prayer meeting:
Please call and coordinate with Mrs. Aleyamma Mathew to host monthly Zonal prayer meeting at your residence.

Important Announcement

Parish wide Assembly meeting is scheduled on May 6th 2007 after the Holy Qurbana.

Agenda:

- * Building committee update.
- * Sunday School time change before Holy Qurbana.

We're on the Web!
<http://stthomasla.com>



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THE POWER OF RESURRECTION

The life of Jesus on this earth began with impossibility and it ended with possibility. His virgin birth was impossible and ended with possible. Three days after His crucifixion, He



came out of the tomb alive this was impossible but it ended with possible. At the death of Jesus the sun was darkened. There was an earthquake, the sepulchers opened, and many unusual things took place. They knew that there was something different about this man. The Roman soldier in charge of crucifixion said "Surely He was the Son of God" The very fact Jesus rose up from the dead is unique to all other religious beliefs. Every founder of every

religion in the world is still in the tomb. Every great man who ever lived in this world and walked this earth and have died and are still in the tomb. But the tomb in Jerusalem is empty today.

Jesus triumphed over death by leaving behind an empty tomb. The resurrection of Jesus proves three things. 1. It proved what He said about Himself. 2. It proved that he had the power that He said he had. 3. It proved that He will do what He promised to do. He said that He is the Resurrection and the Life and that He is the way, the Truth and the Life. He said that He is the Good Shepherd and the Water of Eternal Life.

The same power that raised Jesus from the death is available to us right now. The resurrection of Jesus can solve our past sins and present problems. The resurrection power of Jesus can make our future also secure in Jesus Christ.

Let us ready ourselves to receive the power of resurrection. Let us pray to witness the impossible become a possibility.

By Fr. Yohannan Panicker

CONTINUED... .. OLD CHURCHES OF THE WORLD

San Thome Cathedral Basilica in Mylapore, Chennai is another very old church built over the site where St. Thomas's body was once buried. It is believed that the original church was built by St. Thomas himself. After his death, his body was buried in the Church built by him. In the 10th century Armenian Christians found the burial site and built a church and tomb at the location. In the 12th century most of the Saint's relics were shifted to Ortona in Italy, where they remain today. The Portuguese found the church in ruins when they arrived in India during the 16th century. In 1523 they built a church over the ruins. The church was again rebuilt by the British in 1893 and still stands today. Today, at the Basilica is a small bone of St. Thomas's hand and the lance with which he was pierced.

The San Miguel Chapel, in Santa Fe, New Mexico is believed to be the oldest church in USA. Indian slaves under the direction of the Franciscan Padres in 1610 built it as a mission. It was nearly destroyed during the Pueblo revolt of 1680. In 1710 the Spanish again took control of Santa Fe

and rebuilt the church. During the mid 1800's it served as school chapel for St. Michael's High School and College. The church was remodeled in the 19th century. The altar screen inside the church dates back from 1798 and is inspiring. The bell dates back to the early 1300's. Foundations of the first church can be seen under the sanctuary of the present structure.

These are just a few of the old churches that exist all over the world. With advanced technology being used in archeology, more old churches are being discovered constantly. Today, computers are being used to decipher the inscriptions and correctly date the period to which these old churches belong. However, the most important evidence is from the stories and legends that have been passed down from generations regarding these old churches. Some day in the future, we may hear that archeologists have found the First Temple also known as Solomon's Temple that was built in the 10th century BC.

BY John Varghese