

Egypt in the Bible



Egypt is mentioned directly in the New and Old Testaments more the 550 times in the bible. Among all the nations of the Gentiles we do not find a single nation in which the word of God is interested like Egypt.

- ❖ Egypt is first mentioned in Genesis 12:10
“Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe”
- ❖ It was referred to as a historical land where many of the stories of our early fathers lived and experienced their relationship with the Lord our God. *“Like the garden of the Lord”*
- ❖ Egypt at one time was so beautiful, that Lot, when he describing the plain of Jordan, resembled it as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. (Gen. 13:10)
- ❖ Egypt is also frequently mentioned in the Psalms of David, as well as, in the prophecies of the prophets.

Egypt was a Sanctuary



Egypt provided refuge for God's people multiple times in the Bible.

- ❖ The famine Abraham faced during his life, and his need to come to Egypt to buy food, was repeated at the time of Isaac. (Gen. 26:2)
- ❖ Jacob sent his sons to buy food from Egypt, after he also faced the result of the famine in his time. (Gen. 42:1,2 &3) Jacob later came to Egypt with his family to live. (Gen. 46:7)
- ❖ Hadad, at the time of King David, had to flee to Egypt. He was afraid of David that he may kill him. (I king 11:21)
- ❖ Moses, who was born in Egypt, went to his ancestor's place, to visit his father in law, but the Lord ordered him to return back to Egypt. (Ex 4:19)
- ❖ Our Lord Jesus Christ came to Egypt as a child with His Mother The Virgin Mary and Joseph to flee from Herod the king. (Mt 2:13) They remained in Egypt till they knew that Herod was dead. (Mt 2:19)

The Holy Family in Egypt



The only country visited by the Lord Christ – other than the country where He has been born – is the land of Egypt. This visit has been recorded in the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

- ❖ The visit took place in compliance with the divine command given by the Angel of the Lord to Joseph in a dream, (Mt. 2: 13) And the Child stayed there until the death of Herod, fulfilling Hosea's prophecy "*Out of Egypt I called My Son*" (Hosea 11: 1) written 500 years before.
- ❖ Furthermore, in the Biblical Book of Isaiah, the prophet provides us with a divinely inspired prediction of the effect the holy infant was to have on Egypt and the Egyptians: "*Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt will totter at His Presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt in the midst of it*". (Isaiah 19: 1)
 - It is recorded that the idols fell in the towns visited by the Lord and the Holy Family, thus many places in Egypt were sanctified.
- ❖ God's message, also delivered through the prophetic utterance of Isaiah, "*Blessed be Egypt, My People*," (Isaiah 19: 25), further foreshadowed the singular blessing to be bestowed upon Egypt, for its having been chosen as the Holy Family's haven, and upon its people for having been the first to experience the Christ's miraculous influence.

Prophecies of Egypt in the Bible

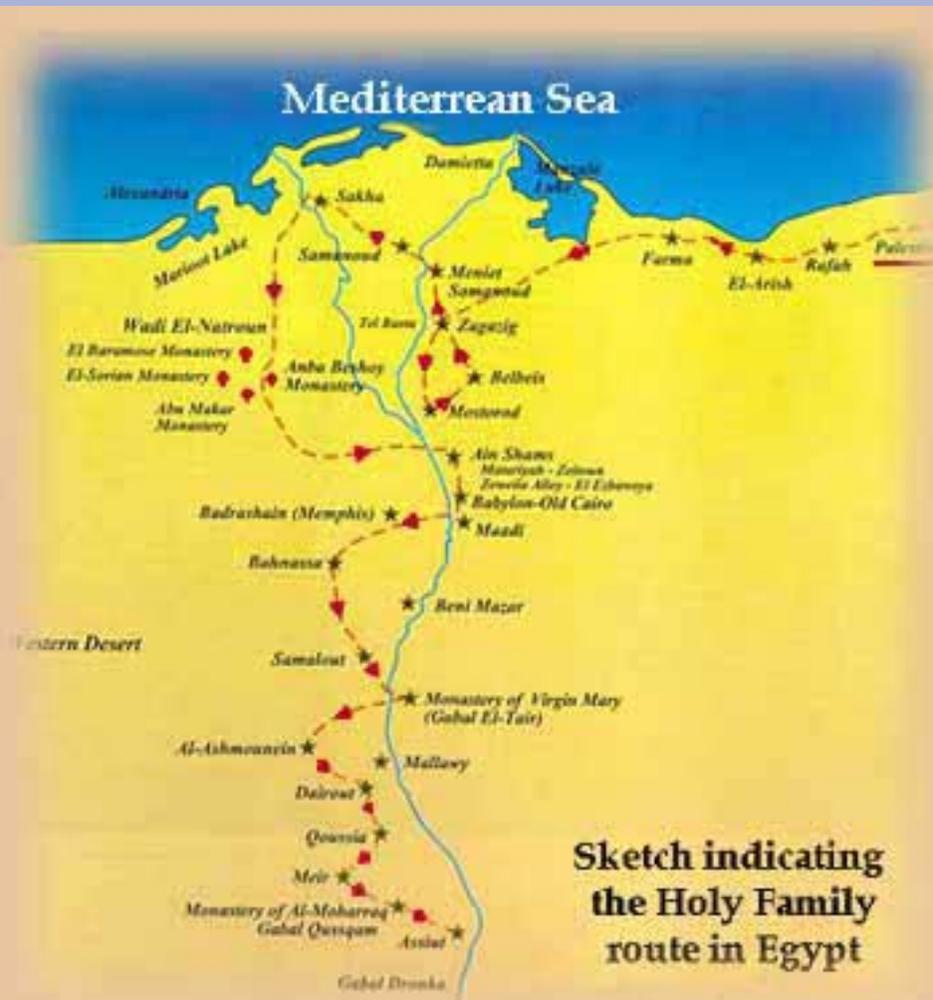


Chapter 19 of the Book of Isaiah is about Egypt. This is only a sample of what is written:

- ❖ *In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. (Isa 19:19)*
- ❖ *Then the Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day and will make sacrifice and offering (Isaiah 19: 21).*
- ❖ *And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them (Isaiah 19: 22).*
- ❖ *In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians (Isaiah 19: 23).*
- ❖ *In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land (Isaiah 19: 24).*
- ❖ *Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance (Isaiah 19: 25).*



Flight into Egypt



How Christianity came to Egypt



The Coptic Church was established in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by St. Mark the Evangelist in the city of Alexandria around 43 A.D.

- ❖ The Copts are proud of the apostolicity of their Church, whose founder is St. Mark; one of the seventy Apostles (Mk 10:10), and one of the four Evangelists. He is regarded by the Coptic hierarchy as the first of our unbroken 117 patriarchs, and also the first of a stream of Egyptian martyrs
- ❖ This apostolicity was not only furnished on grounds of its foundation but rather by the persistence of the Church in observing the same faith received by the Apostle and his successors, the Holy Fathers.
- ❖ Christianity spread throughout Egypt within half a century of Saint Mark's arrival in Alexandria, as is clear from the New Testament writings found in Middle Egypt.

St. Mark



The voice of the lion is the symbol of St. Mark for two reasons:



❖ He begins his Holy Gospel by describing John the Baptist as a lion roaring in the desert (Mk 1:3)

❖ His famous story with lions, as related to us by Severus Ebn-El-Mokafa:

Once a lion and lioness appeared to St. Mark and his father Arostalis while they were traveling in Jordan. The father was very scared and begged his son to escape, while he awaited his fate. St. Mark assured his father that Jesus Christ would save them and began to pray. The two beasts fell dead and as a result of this miracle, the father believed in Christ.

Brief Biography of St. Mark

The Coptic Church or the Church of Alexandria is called "*See of St. Mark*"; one of the earliest four sees: Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome.



- ❖ St. Mark was an African native of Jewish parents who belonged to the Levites' tribe. His family lived in Cyrenaica until they were attacked by some barbarians, and lost their property
- ❖ In Jerusalem, he was given a good education and became conversant in both Greek, Latin, and Hebrew
- ❖ Young Mark was always associated with the Lord, who choose him as one of the seventy apostles. He is mentioned in the Scriptures in a number of events related with the Lord
- ❖ At first, St. Mark accompanied St. Peter on his missionary journeys inside Jerusalem and Judea. Then he accompanied St. Paul and St. Barnabas on their first missionary journey to Antioch, Cyprus and Asia Minor
- ❖ St. Mark's real labor lays in Africa where he established the "*School of Alexandria*"
- ❖ Upon returning to Alexandria in 65 AD, St. Mark found his people firm in faith and thus spent two years preaching and performing miracles, ordaining bishops and priests, and winning more converts
- ❖ St. Mark was martyred in 68 A.D. by being dragged to death around the city.
- ❖ Christians stole his body and secretly buried him in a grave that they had engraved on a rock under the altar of the church. .

Who are the Copts



The term **Coptic** is derived from the Greek **Aigyptos** meaning "Egyptian". Today the word signifies the indigenous Christians of Egypt.

- ❖ The modern use of the term "Coptic" describes Egyptian Christians, the last stage of the Ancient Egyptian language, their distinctive art, and architecture
- ❖ Coptic Christians Comprise about 15% of the Egyptian Population
- ❖ In the Middle East, the Copts constitute the largest body of Christians in that part of the world where Christianity was born.

Coptic Contribution to Christianity



This Patriarchate provided a major role during the first five centuries; It was considered “second to the See of Rome” and remained as such till its division in 451 following the Council of Chalcedony.

- ❖ Among the Coptic Churches contribution to Christianity:
 - The Nicene Creed (proclaimed in all catholic and orthodox churches)
 - The compilation and ordering of the Bible as it is today
 - The order of the Divine Liturgy
 - The calendar assignment and calculation for Easter each year
 - Monasticism
 - Evangelization of North Africa, the Middle East, and portions of Europe
 - Historical writing and teachings of some of the great Christian theologians, saints, and scholars including:
 - Origen (185AD); St. Clement (211AD); St. Athanasious (296AD); St. Cyril (377AD) and many more

Monastic Movement



In Egypt, all monastic forms started in the fourth century to re-attract the heart of the Church to the inner life, after the country had accepted Christianity and the Emperor had opened his door to bishops and priest

- ❖ St. Anthony, the father of monks, was the first Christian to live a life of consecrated solitude. As a hermit in the desert, he lived a long and saintly life that influenced countless people both in his time and for generations thereafter, even to this day.
- ❖ The Coptic monasticism is considered the most profound spiritual revival that ever happened in all the history of the Church. It attracted people from all over the world to practice angelic life in Egypt.
- ❖ One of the remarkable aspects of the Coptic Orthodox Church today is the continual increase of those who are eager to join the monastic life. At present, in Egypt, there are eleven monasteries scattered in the diverse desert regions and six convents within the cities

St. Anthony



The world's first Christian monk was a Copt from Upper Egypt.



- ❖ Born in 251 A.D. to wealthy parents in Coma (Kemn-el-Arouse) in the middle of Egypt.
- ❖ When he was eighteen years of age his parents died, leaving him guardian of his younger and only sister, Dios.
- ❖ Six months later Anthony entered the church to hear the Gospel, in which our Lord speaks to the rich young man, *"If you would be perfect, go sell all you have, give to the poor and come follow me."* (Matthew 19:21)
- ❖ He took this advice as a personal invitation addressed to him by God.
- ❖ His rule consisted simply of prayers and manual work.
- ❖ In 356 A.D., Saint Anthony died at the age of one hundred and five, but his place of burial was never revealed by the two monks, Marcarius and Amatas, who buried him.

Coptic Orthodox Canons



The term "Orthodoxy" here refers to the preservation of the "Original Faith" by the Copts, throughout the ages.

- ❖ The Coptic Orthodox Church believes that the Holy Trinity: God The Father, God The Son, and God The Holy Spirit, are equal to each other in one unity; and that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world.
- ❖ The Coptic Orthodox Church recognizes the Seven Sacraments:
 - Baptism
 - Confirmation
 - Holy Communion (Eucharist)
 - Confession (Penance)
 - Marriage
 - Unction of the Sick
 - Holy Orders

Baptism and Confirmation



From earliest times, the church has practiced chrismation immediately following baptism. In the sacrament of chrismation (from the Greek word "chrismatis", which means "anointing") the newly baptized person receives the Holy Spirit through anointing with oil by the bishop or priest. The roots of this sacrament are clear in both the Old and New Testaments



"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:3-5)

Marriage



This sacrament was established for us when Our Lord attended the wedding at Cana of Galilee. From St.Paul's letter to the Ephesians we can understand that the unity of a man and his wife is a sign of the unity between Christ and the Church. There is great symbolism in the procession.

- ❖ Firstly the Bridegroom waits for the bride at the door of the church as a sign that Adam waited for Eve, also that as they enter the church as one, so shall they be from that time onwards.
- ❖ The bridesmaids holding candles symbolize the five wise virgins who had enough oil for their lamps and went into the wedding (Matthew25:1).
- ❖ The procession towards the altar is a symbol that the couple are coming closer together in order to receive Christ, *as one*, as the wedding is now transformed into an eternal relationship.
- ❖ The priest has the wedding rings tied together by a red ribbon to signify that it is Christ's' blood that is the unity between the couple.
- ❖ The bride and bridegroom only put the ring on half way and the priest pushes the rest symbolizing that the wedding started with the couple but finalized with God after they have called upon Him.
- ❖ The robes placed on the bridegroom symbolize that he is the priest of his household and is responsible to ensure that members read the bible, pray everyday, confess, partake of the Eucharist, and practice love, trust, respect and honesty in their lives.



Coptic Wedding



The Present Coptic Church



Our Church is ancient and new at the same time: ancient in being apostolic and traditional in sticking fast to the original apostolic faith without deviation. She is also new through her Living Messiah who never becomes old and through the Spirit of God who renews her youth (Ps. 103:5).

- ❖ Today, the Copts number about nine million, and the Coptic liturgy is still celebrated in its original form.
- ❖ The Coptic Church is experiencing this century quite a significant revival in many aspects of its life: in its ministry both at home and abroad, in education, and in ecumenism.
 - Institutions have been erected in Egypt to present to the world facilities for research in the Science of Coptology.
 - Youth movement and Sunday Schools have been working with great zeal.
 - The number of the theological seminaries has increased tremendously all over Egypt and the curricula has been highly developed to reflect the advancement of research in the fields of Patristics, Religious Education, etc.

Spreading the Word



There are around 1.5 million Coptic immigrants living in The United States, Canada, Australia, Europe, Africa and Asia

- ❖ Coptic Orthodox theological seminaries were established in the USA and Australia.
- ❖ New ministries such as the "Diaconia" project have been introduced to cater to the needs of people in rural areas.
- ❖ The Coptic Church's missionaries were sent in the past few decades to many African countries and a bishop was ordained to look after this ministry.
- ❖ Other churches are established in Kuwait, Libya, Lebanon, Europe, England, North and South America, the Caribbean Islands and Australia.
- ❖ At home new churches have been built and new monasteries and convents have been established.
- ❖ The number of monks and nuns has been on the increase in the past fifty years

Ecumenical Council

The Church has come out of isolation to meet with other churches, both Catholic and Protestant in Ecumenical Councils. Dialogues between the Coptic Church and other Churches have been initiated and carried out by the Coptic Patriarch himself in brotherly love to work towards the achievement of the oneness of faith.



Meeting of the Popes

In 2000, Pope John Paul II began his Middle East Pilgrimage with a trip To Egypt where he met with our Pope Shounda III



Pope Shenouda sent a delegation of senior Metropolitans and bishops to greet the Roman Pope upon arrival, and on that evening Pope John Paul II visited the Papal Residence, where he and his attendants were welcomed by Pope Shenouda. Thirty-four members of the Holy Synod, a large numbers of priests, members of the laity. The Theological Seminary Choir chanted a Coptic hymns and children presented Pope John Paul with flowers. Pope Shenouda presented Pope John Paul with a Golden Cross and small Coptic icons of the Flight of the Holy Family in Egypt for his entourage. Metropolitan Bishop, the General Secretary of the Holy Synod, presented Pope John Paul with two large icons painted by the nuns of St. Demyana's convent, the Flight to Egypt and the Burning Bush.

Coptic Iconography

Iconography is the Sacred Art of the Orthodox Church. Christianity holds the human figure as the focus of its visual expression. This is mainly due to its belief in the incarnation of the Logos, the second person of the Trinitarian God, as expressed in the first lines of St. John's Gospel: "... and the Word was made flesh..."



- ❖ The main function of iconography is liturgical. Icons are an integral part of Orthodox worship inspiring and teaching the faithful the mysteries of the Christian faith through the medium of color. Iconography is above all visual theology. Icons stand on the threshold between the material and spiritual realms.
- ❖ Coptic iconography reached its zenith during the Coptic period, between the 4th and 7th centuries, Coptic spirituality and culture flourished during this time
- ❖ Coptic artists and craftsmen were also quite prolific during the Fatimid period, 10th – 12th centuries, a period of renewal in Coptic art.
- ❖ However, by the 19th century, Coptic iconography had all but disappeared

Coptic Art

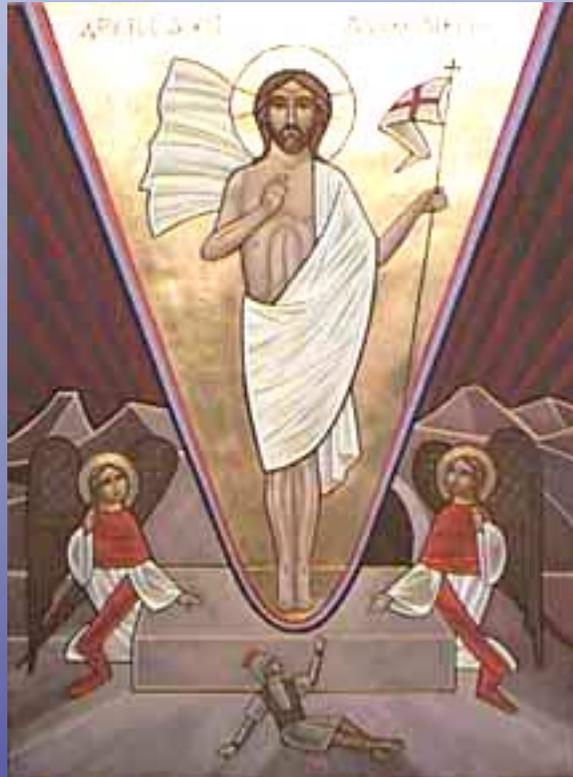
Coptic art is characterized by a high degree of stylization verging on abstraction. Forms are flattened out, and individual motifs acquire bold simplicity and decorative character. Remains of wall paintings reveal scenes from the Old and New Testaments and images of the Mother and Child. Representative examples of Coptic art are in sculpture, textiles, ivory, and illumination.



Coptic Art



Pentecost



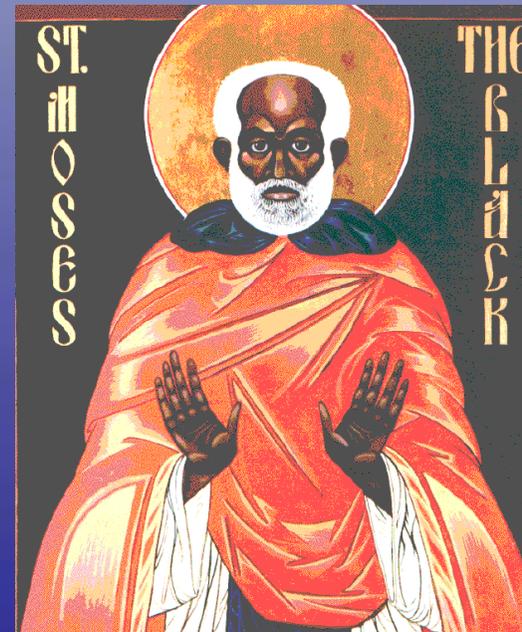
The Resurrection



Archangel Michael



Flight into Egypt



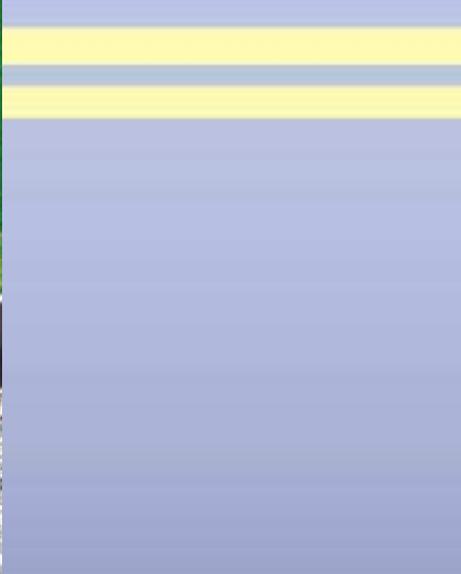
St. Moses the black

Coptic Architecture

Coptic churches that were built after the third century, had one of two common floor plans. They were built on the shape of a cross to emphasize that the "redemption is through the church" or they were built on the shape of a ship to emphasize the notion of "the church as a ship protected by God, floating in the midst of the world's torrents" (appealing to Noah's ark).



- ❖ The main Coptic tradition has the altar facing east and placing the entrance to the west



Coptic Churches





The Coptic Cross

The Coptic Church identifies itself with the Cross more than other church. Historian, Edward Walkin took note of this and wrote:



The cross suits this cruel culture of poverty and persecution, both as identification and an outlet for the Copts. It is their brand and their balm; it gives a meaning to life when there are only blind nature and inexplicable misfortune. If Western Christianity gives prime glory to Easter, the day of Resurrection, deliverance and confirmation of Christ's divinity --- Good Friday is more appropriate psychologically to the Copts. On this day when the cross was born as a universal Christian symbol, modern Copts say "Kyrie elesion" (Lord, have mercy upon us) 400 times at home, 100 times in each direction, and flock to their churches.

While the Copts share the cross with the rest of Christianity, with no other group is its presence so obsessive. This ranges from the Patriarch, who holds the cross in front of himself as though it were both a shield and a weapon, to the ragged village children who run after strangers, with crude blue tattoos of the cross on the inside of their right wrists and crosses around their necks. Whenever the Patriarch appears, Copts rush forward to kiss his cross. The fixation is symbolized at baptism when the infant is anointed 36 times all over his body.

Crosses are painted over the doors of Coptic houses in towns and villages or formed in bas-relief in mud over the openings of mud homes. Sometimes the house and cross are brick. The Copts, who are fond of reading the family Bible at home, are aware of Exodus 12:13 and the significance of a sign in order to escape the wrath of the Lord: *"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt."*

--Edward Wakin, *Lonely Minority: The Modern Story of Egypt's Copts* (New York; William Morrow & Company, 1963) p.136