

PRE-GOSPEL PERIOD

THE APOSTOLIC AGE

THE EARLIEST PROCLAIMED MESSAGE OR GOSPEL (KERYGMA)

During the time of Jesus' Public Ministry the Gospels were not written. It was a time when he was still preaching and the disciples were witnesses of Jesus' message. Even immediately after his ascension to heaven, the disciples and apostles could not write.

In the period after the ascension, the message about Jesus Christ (the Gospel) was transmitted by the apostles and other eye witnesses. The Gospel was spread orally (by the word of mouth).

The apostles were proclaiming the new Kingdom which was different from the old one. In this period, the events of the life of Jesus were still well preserved in the minds of those who witnessed his public ministry.

Most people during the apostolic period relied on memory and what they possessed was the Good News about Jesus Christ otherwise called the *Kerygma*.

The word Kerygma is an English expression of a Greek word *Keryssein* which means to proclaim or announce the message.

In other words, members of the early Church preached the Kerygma as the original form of the Gospel message. In brief, Kerygma was the earliest preached Gospel by the word of mouth. Sometimes the preachers used to preach from door to door. It took a long time before this Good News could be written down. Its content can be shown as follows:-

THE CONTENT OF THE KERYGMA

1. The Kerygma was centred around the life of Jesus Christ. The message proclaims that Jesus was born of a virgin woman. His mother was well known as Mary.
2. The main content was that Jesus was the Messiah, that is, the one expected to come, saviour, a redeemer anointed son of God; indeed a Liberator.
3. That Jesus had come so that the Old testament prophecies of Isaiah 9: 1- 7, 42: 1- 9, Isaiah 52 and 53 and Daniel 7: 1ff, be fulfilled.
4. The kerygma was centred around the sayings or the words of Jesus. It stressed that he preached and many crowds gathered around him. His preaching was in parables and it exposed the nature of God's Kingdom. E.g. the parable of mustard seed, a sower, etc.
5. The kerygma also stressed his deeds (the works of Jesus). His divine authority was proved by miracles and the wonders which God performed through him.
6. It also stressed that Jesus came to fulfil the Old testament law and prophets.
7. The kerygma stressed that Jesus was anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit as a son of God and so his authority was clearly proved that it was from God. That was during his baptism. "*This is my own dear son ... listen to him*".
8. The kerygma also stressed that Jesus was associated with all kinds of people including outcasts.
9. That Christ was opposed in his life Ministry to the extent that the stiffest opposition came from his home town- Nazareth. He was rejected by the Pharisees, Sadducees and the teachers of law.

10. The kerygma was centred on Jesus' suffering. He was arrested, tortured and killed during the time of Pontius Pilate. Then he was accused innocently and handed over to the Roman authorities who in turn declared him innocent but the Jews preferred him dead.
11. Kerygma also stressed that Jesus was crucified and that he died an accursed death i.e. as if he was a criminal.
12. It also stressed that Jesus was buried and rose again on the third day as the scriptures foretold.
13. After his resurrection, appeared to many people- his disciples e.g. Peter, Thomas, Mary Magdalene and Mary his Mother, etc.
14. The Kerygma goes on to show that Jesus ascended into heaven and is now exalted and seated at the right hand-side of God the father.
15. Prior to his ascension, he had promised the power of the Holy Spirit as an assurance of his overlordship.
16. Jesus also promised to come back (Paraousia) where he will judge the dead and the living on the last day.
17. The Kerygma calls upon the people to prepare for his second coming through *repentance*.
18. Thus the people are called upon to accept and be baptised and by their actions, God will forgive their sins and save them from the coming judgement.
19. The Kerygma stressed that salvation is by faith not obedience to Mosaic law.
20. The stressed that reconciliation came to mankind through Jesus' death who saved man from his sins.
21. That Jesus has come in David's line according to God's promises.
22. The belief in the Gospel gives the gift of eternal life.
23. Jesus commissioned his apostles to preach the Good News, perform miracles, convert people and expand God's Kingdom.
24. The Kerygma emphasised the belief in the trinity of God- i.e. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

THE RELEVANCE OF KERYGMA TO THE CHURCH OR CHRISTIANS TODAY

1. The Christian creed which the Christian Church sticks on stems from the Kerygma.
2. The Church still recognises the central place of the Holy Spirit and this originates from the Kerygma.
3. The Church believes in the existence of miracles and this is contained in the Kerygmatic teaching.
4. Today, the kerygma is relevant to the Message of the Church. The Church continues to honour and celebrate the day of ascension.
5. The church today preaches the Good News just as it was being preached during the period of the early church.
6. Every twenty-fifth December of each year, the Church celebrates the birth of Jesus. The Kerygma stresses the birth of Jesus.
7. Christians anticipate paraousia yet to come. They are preparing for it. They have had some speculations about it. They believe that the day is only known by God and mankind should expect it anytime.
8. The Christians believe that when Jesus comes back, he will judge the dead and the living.
9. They always call for repentance.
10. The Church today still encourages the members to suffer with Christ as suffering is a central message in Kerygma.
11. Christians believe that their faith is based on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the central message of the Kerygma.
12. The Church believes and still practices baptism.

12. Christians believe that Jesus is their saviour, messiah who died to liberate them.
13. The Church calls upon people to repent their sins.

ACTIVITIES OF THE EARLY CHURCH MEMBERS

1. Church members were busy worshipping and praising God in hymns, prayers, creeds.
2. They were giving instructions to the infant churches.
3. The early Christians went around- preaching the 'Gospel' (Ketygtha) i.e. went on evangelising.
4. Praying and breaking of the bread i.e. sharing the Holy Eucharist.
5. The early church Christians appointed leaders i.e. deacons to assist in administering the church.
6. They started laying hands on people.
7. Presented the Gospel message and carried out Biblical teachings.
8. At the time, they transmitted, and preserved the Gospel message.
9. Members of the early church started getting involved in writing the Gospel message e.g. Mark, Matthew, Luke and John yet, others wrote letters e.g. St Paul wrote to other Christians of Corinth, Galatia, Rome, etc.
10. People lived together through fellowshipping e.g. in crusades, etc.
11. Most members of the early church spent their time answering very difficult questions on dogmatic teaching and views of gnostics so as to save the public from false teachings.
12. Christians also exercised the gifts of the Holy Spirit- performing miracles, speaking in tongues, etc.
13. This was the time when most of them made Missionary journeys- for example, St Paul moved to Galatian provinces, Corinth, Capadocia, Asia Minor, Rome, etc.
14. The Christian leaders went on baptising others in order to expand the Kingdom of god as instructed by Jesus.
15. They went founding many churches in the areas they visited.
16. The early church leaders spent most of their time solving Christian problems, settling the Christian disputes, etc.
17. They also anticipated in the sharing of the material property. The rich sold what they had and shared the proceeds with those who were in need.
18. They encouraged fellow Christian members to repent their sins and participated in fasting as a way of encouraging the newly converted people to turn away from their sins.
19. They went around comforting each other in withstanding persecution.
20. They carried out liturgical services, catechism i.e. they gave oral instructions (principles of religion) to young children Acts 2: 42.
21. The early apostles divided themselves in groups and started visiting the sick, caring for the poor, etc.
22. Held constant meetings to have clear discussions on how to handle difficult issues of circumcision, the law and Gentile conversion.
23. They instilled morality and discipline in the young Christians through teaching of moral values.

THE PERIOD OF ORAL TRADITION IN RELATION TO THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

1. This is the period in the early church when the Gospel message was being transmitted orally or by use of the mouth and from house to house, or from person to person.
2. It was the period between the ascension of Jesus and the time of writing the Gospels i.e. from 33 A.D. to 64 A.D.
3. It is the Kerygmatic period when the Gospel message started circulating by word of mouth. Here what Jesus had taught was being spread by the disciples and other eye witnesses.
4. During this period, there was a lot of anxiety in expectation of Parousia i.e. the second coming of Jesus Christ.
5. During this period, the Christians were struggling to win as many converts as fast as possible.
6. It was a period when there were very many eye witnesses enthusiastic to spread the Gospel message through preaching and door to door conversion.
7. At this time, the apostles or disciples positioned themselves everywhere so as to be consulted in case people needed Jesus' pronouncements or teachings.
8. It was a period of active preaching, exercising the power of the Holy Spirit, etc.
9. The period reflected the church members involved in different activities- baptising, making missionary journeys, emphasis on prayer, interpreting Jesus' works and sayings, fellowshipping, sharing, moral instructions among others.
10. It was a period when we see members of the church under serious persecution, when they were taken before the councils, harassed by the Roman emperor- Nero.
11. During this period, the eye witnesses emphasised the death and resurrection of Jesus as a core message of this period.
12. This period was characterised by attempts to interpret the Gospel message in terms of God's Kingdom.
13. The period was characterised by sharing of property e.g. selling land and sharing the money.
14. Christians at this time were trying to link the era of Jesus to the Old testament scriptures i.e. how the Old testament had been fulfilled by Jesus.
15. At this time most people used to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem as a centre of Christianity.
16. It was a time when Christians concentrated on the breaking of bread as a way of fellowshipping.
17. It was a period of active repentance through baptism in light of the Kerygmatic teaching "*Repent and be baptised*".
18. It was a period when the Holy Spirit was very active in the life Christians. They could prophecy, speak in tongues, preach with wisdom, etc.
19. It was a period when the followers of Christ could take challenges, accept persecution, endure death because of the belief in the resurrection of Jesus and their own resurrection. After all, Jesus had said, "*You will be persecuted for my sake*".
20. The period was being marked by molestation, sabotage and malicious acts against the followers of Christ. They were being stoned to death e.g. Stephen, and being thrown out of the church.
21. It was a period of liturgy, evening talks to the young Christians and the teaching of catechism.
22. During this period, church communities transmitted, cherished and preserved the gospel Message through rehearsals. This period focused on Jesus' resurrection and when writing Gospels, it is believed that this was the first part to be written.

Q: Comment on the period of oral tradition in relation to the Gospel message.

REASONS (FACTORS/ CIRCUMSTANCES) WHY THE GOSPELS WERE NOT WRITTEN DURING THE PERIOD OF THE ORAL TRADITION

1. The exercise of writing was tiresome; so most people could not commit themselves to write the Gospels.
2. Lack off finance: By this time, the Church was still impoverished and financially incapacitated. Since it was expensive to write, that is why the Gospel was spread orally.
3. Persecution from within created a lot of fear such that no person could risk publishing anything about Christ.
4. Some Christians were arguing that Jesus had commanded his disciples to preach but not to write. So, they saw no need of writing.
5. The witnesses of Jesus were so busy that there was no leisure time to commit to writing.
6. It was also believed that Jesus had not written any Gospel and so, the disciples were imitating him by confining themselves on preaching orally.
7. The size of the church was still small. For this matter, it was easy to carry out oral preaching and there was no need of writing the Gospel.
8. By this time, writing materials e.g. the scrolls was too expensive. The disciples being poor could not afford writing.
9. The Christians still had the Old testament scriptures to refer to. Therefore, there was no ardent need to write.
10. Most of the apostles, disciples and other witnesses were still alive. Whoever wanted to know about Christ could just consult them and get first hand information. There was no need of writing.
11. Related to the above, the disciples', apostles' and eye witnesses' memories were still fresh and sharp. They could reproduce everything concerning Christ to everyone. Thus, there was no need of writing.
12. There was a thing that Parousia (Jesus imminent return) was near. So, there was no need of writing since this would waste their time and effort.
13. The first half of the century was still a non-literary age. Thus, the first followers of Jesus were illiterate i.e. not well educated people. Most of them had been fishermen.
14. It was a common practice for the *Rabbis* (teachers) to teach orally. Therefore, the preachers felt it was normal to use the oral method popularly used by them. Even when Jesus started his Public Ministry, he used oral method, which all the Jews were used to. Therefore, that is why the apostles did not bother to write.
15. Initially, writing was expected to be done by scribes only. Since these people existed but were not interested in Jesus, then, none could think of writing. If a person was to do this, he had to get permission from the scribes.
16. There was still a problem of language barrier. For example, the language off the Jews differed from that of the Gentiles. The disciples preferred to use oral means than writing.
17. There was also scarcity and lack of raw materials to use such as special ink, papyrus, etc. This hindered the apostles from writing.
18. There was also a misconception that Christianity was for the Jews. This hindered the apostles and other Jewish Christians from writing to the Gentiles.
19. It is often argued that the Holy Spirit had not yet inspired the early Christians to write. The Christians were full of gifts of oral preaching, etc.
20. The apostles and their colleagues expected their generation to be the last one. Since they believed that Jesus was about to come back and judge the dead and the living, there was no need of writing since they expected no other generation.

21. It took a long time for Christianity to be accepted in most parts of the world, so, the apostles could not write the Gospel since they were not sure that Christianity could be accepted by all the people.
22. It was very difficult to collect and organise the data from eye witnesses as they were busy preaching in different parts of the world.
23. It is also said that there were still disagreements amongst the followers of Jesus. It was better to first preach to them instead of writing.

REASONS WHY IT WAS NECESSARY TO WRITE THE GOSPELS

1. There was a lot of persecution by Emperor Nero around 64 A.D. Most Christians went into hiding; Peter, Paul and other could have probably died during this time. As a result, writing was seen as a possible way through which the Good News could spread.
2. Some eye witnesses including apostles started dying. The information about Christ had to be written for its easy preservation.
3. At this time, people memories started fading. There was fear that the Kerygma would be forgotten. As a result, writing was seen to be a solution.
4. Some problems started arising in distant churches. So the New testament materials had to be written. E.g. St Paul had to write to the Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Romans, Phillipians, etc.
5. The Church started expanding geographically and numerically. This necessitated the writing of the Gospels and other letters so as to have the Good News spread where the apostles could not reach.
6. At this time, materials for writing became available e.g. scrolls, manuscripts, etc.
7. The Church's economic stand improved and so it was easy to meet the cost of writing.
8. As the Christians waited for Paraousia i.e. Jesus' imminent second coming, it delayed. So, they wrote to have Good News so as to keep up the hopes of Christians as they waited for the day.
9. As time went on, there was a necessity to have permanent records so that the future generation would be helped to know the life and the ministry of Jesus and what he did for them on the cross.
10. At this period, there emerged some false teaching, which misled some Christians. So, there was a need to have proper documents which they were to use to guide the Christians.
11. The period of literacy and modernity had set in. Many people had learnt how to read and write. So, they started writing the Good News and other New testament materials.
12. The Holy Spirit also continued to inspire them to write.
13. Also there came a question of moral issues in the church which needed to be addressed by using the scriptures as point of guidance.
14. There was a need to make it clear for both Jews and Gentiles that Jesus was a Messiah. This could only be done by writing the Gospels.
15. The writing became necessary for liturgical purposes. There was a need for Christian literature to facilitate Christian instructions.
16. Also writing became necessary for catechism purposes. The people who were being prepared for baptism and the young converts needed permanent scriptures if their faith was to be preserved.
17. It was necessary to put the oral Gospel in more lasting form because some Christians who were becoming old could not travel for long distances. Tired of missionary journeys and walking long distances, the writing of the Gospels became inevitable.

18. It was realised also that written messages would spread so fast than oral messages. As they had been charged with the duty of spreading the Good News, then writing became an inevitable means.
19. There was also a need to defend Christianity before government leaders by writing and proving that it was not against the affairs of the state.
20. As time went on, people continued to doubt Jesus' resurrection. So, there was a need to write and prove the reality of resurrection.
21. There were so many Christians who were scattered in many parts of the world, depressed because of persecution; there was a need to write so as to encourage them in their sufferings.
22. There emerged so many evangelists who needed materials to use while carrying out their ministry.
23. Need to preserve the Good News in its original form made the writers compose the Gospels. This is because the oral Gospel was susceptible to be misinterpreted and distorted. So, by putting it in a more lasting form, this problem would be solved.
24. At this time, there was confusion brought about by docetic thinking. Here people started saying that Jesus was only man; others argued that to write and prove that Jesus was both man and God. So, there was a need to write and clarify.

GUIDING QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED BY THE ABOVE

- Q: Discuss the circumstances (reasons) which occasioned the writing of the New Testament Gospels.**
- Q: Examine the factors which facilitated the end of the oral period.**

METHODS (MEANS) USED IN THE TRANSMISSION OF THE GOOD NEWS IN THE PERIOD OF THE EARLY CHURCH

1. Oral transmission: This was a method of preaching by use of the mouth; from person to person and house to house. It was a common method before other methods were adopted.
2. By exercising spiritual gifts e.g. healing, speaking in tongues, prophesying, discerning, etc.
3. Through prayer and praising the Lord the Good News spread in many parts of the world. Prayer characterised the life of early Christians. Through this the Gospel was accepted and people became Christians.
4. Through performing miracles in the name of Jesus, many people believed and accepted Christianity.
5. Emphasis was also put on sacraments e.g. celebrations of the Lord's supper (Holy Communion), baptism of those who believed, etc., as a result the Gospel spread beyond Jerusalem.
6. By giving testimonies of what Jesus Christ had done for them on the cross i.e. by being witnesses of Christ suffering, death and resurrection. This helped the Gospel message to spread faster thus extending Christianity in far off lands.
7. The Gospel message was also spread by showing practical love (or agape love). Christians could share property, visit the sick, assist the needy etc. In so doing the Gospel message spread like fire.
8. Good conduct of Christians became a means through which the Gospel message was spread. Here, they won admiration and confidence of the non-believers. Consequently, the latter accepted and were converted into Christianity.
9. Through endurance of persecution and accepting martyrdom. Most people accepted suffering as a means to eternity, accepted Jesus in their life styles and became converted. It is such endurance of Christians that won many followers to Christianity.
10. By making missionary journeys and spreading the Good News e.g. St Paul moved to Gentile hands and spread the Gospel.
11. Through fellowships, crusades, and interpreting the Old testament scriptures to the audience showing how they had been fulfilled in the personality of Christ Jesus. With this, the Gospel message was accepted.
12. The Good News also spread through open air preaching. People would preach from anywhere in public places e.g. city centres, near hospitals, funeral rites and with this, the Good News spread in many parts of the world.
13. As the oral period was ending, the early apostles wrote the Gospels. Mark became the first to write by around 64 A.D., Matthew, Luke, and John followed suit. As a result, the account of Jesus' life was made known to the people who accepted and became baptised.
14. Other forms of Christian literature was circulated. St Paul himself wrote 13 letters and dispatched them to different cities to Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, etc.
15. Christian meetings were held, responsibilities given to different people and the Church expanded.

METHODS OF SPREADING THE GOSPEL TODAY

1. Sunday services i.e. listening to preachers.
2. Open air preaching through crusades.
3. Free Bible courses are provided e.g. Wandegeya in Kampala, Uganda.
4. Some people especially "the born again" Christians use oral methods. They move from person to person and house to house etc.
5. Some people are gifted with the power of God. They perform miracles and as a result people accept Jesus as their saviour and Lord.

6. Through baptism.
7. Through radios, television, newspapers that is, mass media. Christian programmes are telecast and by this the Good News is spreading.
8. Giving free services to non-believers.
9. Taking part in sacraments such as Holy Communion, Holy matrimony, etc.
10. Moral conduct, i.e. putting Christian teaching through practice. Some Christians are exemplary in their conduct. This has helped the Gospel message to spread in many communities.
11. In schools, Christian Religious Education lessons and lectures are imparted to schoolchildren and through this, the Good News is being spread.
12. Seminars, crusades, retreats, etc.
13. Giving free Christian literature on streets, hospitals, schools etc.
14. The Good News is being transmitted through plays, dance, music and drama.
15. Through fellowships and congregational prayer, holding Christian youth conferences, synods, etc.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE ORAL METHOD OF THE TRANSMISSION OF THE GOOD NEWS IN THE EARLY CHURCH PERIOD

The oral period lasted about 35 years and during this time the Gospel was preached by use of mouth. In fact the oral method of transmission became popular. It had the following advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages

1. It was a solution to expensive writing. This is because, the people being poor could not afford writing materials.
2. It was easy to adopt and it encouraged fellowship in the Christian community of the early church period.
3. It was a universal method and could benefit all the Jews and Gentiles.
4. The method was cost effective because one person could preach to many people or more from individual to individual meaning that he could attract attention of everyone.
5. It was a method that allowed easy mobility i.e. a person could move from one place to another.
6. Correct information could be imparted into minds of listeners because transmitters were people of strong memory. No part would be lost in the process.
7. Some preachers had seen Christ and so, the truth about the Messiah could easily be available to people in its original form.
8. Such a method had a geometrical multiplication effect; i.e. it could enable the expansion of the Church numerically and geographically (in number and different parts).
9. It was in line with Jesus' method of preaching. Jesus often preached orally, so people could understand the information better. It was because they used to converge around Jesus to listen to him.
10. Any occasion could be used to spread the message. Therefore, it was time saving. A person could use any opportunity to spread the Gospel even when he was on a total different mission. In short it was convenient.
11. Some people would be inspired by the preacher's message as he preached to them. Such method carried charismatic effects.
12. Since it usually depended on a house to house preaching, the message left members of given family convicted. They could make personal decisions without consulting other members of the public.
13. It would enable a preacher to get full attention from an individual. It was a face to face contact method. This enabled the Good News to percolate into the hearts of listeners if it was to be preached to a big congregation.

14. The method was flexible enough. It allowed freedom of expression or exchange of facts, questioning and clarification especially when the preacher was not fully understood.

Disadvantages

1. The method was subject to distortion. The Good News could be perceived wrongly and another person would carry it to his friend in a distorted form.
2. As eye witnesses died, then that would be the end of the Gospel. That is why other complementary methods had to be adopted.
3. The method was risky for it depended on sharp memories of the people. Those who had poor memories could not grasp much. They could easily forget what was preached.
4. There was no room for deeper scrutiny or criticism since it was limited to a few people on the spot and some could fear to criticise the preachers for purposes of respect. So, some errors could go without being criticised.
5. The method was tiresome to preachers for it involved repetitions and it was only confined to a few people in affordable distance. Those from far off lands could not easily benefit from it.
6. The method was greatly affected by the language as a media. It could only benefit the Jews and to a Gentile who did not know the language, it was a mere story without meaning to him.
7. The method depended on the Holy Spirit inspiration otherwise, a preacher would be stuck in the process of communication especially where he failed to recall what exactly had happened to Jesus Christ.
8. The method was also subject to the heretical tendencies of manipulation. The enemies of the Church would also join and send wrong information to the public.
9. There was also lack of co-ordination amongst the preachers. Sometimes, they could preach in a somewhat contradictory form depending on reliability or unreliability of sources where the message had been picked.
10. There were some omissions and additions depending on the strength or weakness of the preacher. Some exaggerations could be made since it was open to any interested person to go and inform his colleagues about Christ.
11. Now that anybody could take the information and tell it to the neighbour, some enemies of the Church started misinterpreting it to suit their interests; causing confusion, deliberately blaspheming and misinforming the public.
12. It also depended on the interest of a listener. If one found a tired person, depressed or sick listener, he would talk about Christ only to receive insults, and blows.

GUIDING QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED BY ABOVE POINTS

Q: Comment on *one* of the methods used in the transmission of Good News in The period of the early Church.

Q: Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the oral method of transmission of Good News in the first thirty five years of the early Church period.

THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE SPREAD OF THE GOOD NEWS IN THE EARLY CHURCH PERIOD

The Holy Spirit forms the third person in trinity. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he had promised to send to all the followers the power of the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon them and enabled them to do the following:

1. It brought unity amongst all believers. With this, they were able to spread the Good News.
2. It is the Holy Spirit that enabled people to repent and turn to God and in so doing, the Gospel spread.
3. The Holy Spirit enabled Christians perform miracles and wonders in Jesus' name. People believed and consequently, the Gospel spread cf Acts 3: 1 ff.
4. The Holy Spirit empowered them to preach with wisdom and out of this, the Gospel spread.
5. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that marks the beginning of the Christian faith.
6. The power of the Holy Spirit in the spread of the Good News can be witnessed in inspiring the former persecutors of the Church to turn to Christ. A man like Saul (later Paul) was completely transformed into an apostle of Christ on his way to Damascus.
7. It allowed them to preach in languages that could be understood by all Christians.
8. The Holy Spirit reminded the believers of what Jesus had done for them on the cross.
9. The Holy Spirit inspired the preaching of the apostles and it touched men's hearts.
10. It is the Holy Spirit that made Christians distinguish acts of Judaism from those of Christianity and followed the latter.
11. The Holy Spirit influenced the people and they became baptised. As a result, the Church grew and expanded.
12. During the difficult times of emperor Nero's persecution acts, it is the Holy Spirit that enabled Christians to withstand or endure suffering.
13. With the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples came out of the hiding courageously and they started spreading the Good News.
14. The Holy Spirit convicted men of their sins and brought them to repentance.
15. It led Christians to have exemplary lives and this helped in winning many people to Christ; thus, assisting in the spread of the Gospel.
16. The holy Spirit inspired the early Gospel writers to recall the Kerygmatic information very well and write the four Gospels- Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. All wrote the accounts of Jesus Christ under the influence of the Holy Spirit. As a result, the gospel spread to the gentile world.
17. Under the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles successfully made missionary journeys and reclaimed the Good News to the Gentile world.
18. The Holy Spirit made the early Christians fellowship with one another, share the Eucharist and develop love towards one another etc. With these, the Gospel spread very fast.
19. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that enabled the Christians be patient in waiting for Parousia. Up to the present day, Jesus has not yet come back yet, he had promised them to come back soon. Had it not been for the Holy Spirit, they would have given up Christianity.
20. The Holy Spirit enabled early Christians to select the 27 books of the New testament and to get proper criteria of doing this.

REPORTS OF APOSTLES IN SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS

- ◊ Apostles also put in personal effort in the spread of Good News.
- ◊ They walked long distances on their missionary journeys.
- ◊ They encouraged people to attend love feasts.
- ◊ They encouraged self control amongst the Christians in times of temptation.
- ◊ Apostles' commitments.
- ◊ They organised seminars, conferences, etc.
- ◊ Visited the sick.
- ◊ Participated in the building of the churches.
- ◊ Consoled and comforted Christians, etc.

FACTORS LIMITING THE MOVE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TODAY

1. Lack of time to spare for God.
2. Rigid laws in the Church. Some people are not allowed to make noise while praising God in some churches.
3. Hypocrisy on the side of Christians.
4. Lack of genuine love amongst Christians.
5. Jealousy, envy, malice, sabotage, etc.
6. Discrimination practised in some churches.
7. Sycretism, idolatry instead of worshipping only one God.
8. Lack of good exemplary acts amongst Christian leaders.
9. Immorality practised by some Christians.
10. The world is becoming less religious and it is becoming secular.
11. Chaos, disorder, upheavals. turbulence everywhere limits the chances for the Holy Spirit to manifest itself.
12. Malicious acts and all sorts atrocities such as murder, genocide e.g. in Rwanda, killings in northern Uganda and Kasese all prevent the Holy Spirit from doing its work.
13. Generally, lack of faith in God, loss of trust and confidence in God by most people.
14. Economic hardships. Some people are material oriented.

EXCEPTIONAL CASES WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MANIFESTED ITSELF

1. In some Churches e.g. Pentecostals, the Holy Spirit manifests itself.
2. There is a spirit of fellowships, unity amongst the *saved* believers.
3. Some people perform miracles in Jesus' name. It only requires faith from believers.
4. There are some people who are repenting and turning away from their sins e.g. there are many charismatic Roman Catholics who act under the influence of the Holy Spirit..
5. There are people who are persecuted for their faith and continue to spread the Gospel. This is due to the power of the Holy Spirit.
6. Some people of faith become survivors of road accidents e.g. 1 out of 14 people may survive an accident. This is an evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work.
7. In the churches where the *savedees* pray from, they speak in tongues and preach with a strong force because of the influence of the Holy Spirit.
8. The building of churches in most parts of the world is largely the work of the Holy Spirit.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- (a) "The spreading of the Good News was largely the work of the Holy Spirit than man's effort." Comment.
- (b) In which ways does the Holy Spirit manifest himself in the life of Christians today ?
- (c) Analyse the factors that have limited the work of the Holy Spirit today.

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH IN SPREADING THE GOSPEL

The apostolic period was a period in the early Church that ranged from 35- 100 A.D.; a time when some of the disciples were still alive and active. The problems that were faced in this period were:

1. The major problem was that of poverty. Most of them were poor with no sure means of survival.
2. There also emerged a problem of disunity amongst Christians especially in the city of Corinth. Some claimed to follow Peter, others Paul, Apollos yet others claimed to follow Christ.
3. There was a problem of opposition and persecution which started in Jerusalem with the stoning of Stephen, later to Peter and Paul and other apostles. There were also sudden arrests made by emperor Nero who harassed the Christians.
4. As the Gospel picked root, St Paul's personality posed a lot of problems. His background posed a big problem in his evangelisation crusades. In Galatia and (Corinth) they doubted his apostoleship since he had previously persecuted the church and he was a fanatic follower of the law.
5. Problem of cultural conflicts. The Jews could not compromise with the Gentiles since their cultures conflicted.
6. There was the problem of the gnostics: heretics and the saboteurs. There was undermining the Church and Christian faith.
7. There were also tiresome missionary journeys. The apostles had to walk long distances having no water, food, and other basic needs.
8. There also emerged a problem of backsliding as some Christians fell in to temptations and lost their faith.
9. At this time, there was a problem of language barrier. There were several languages and the people could not understand Aramaic and other Jewish languages.
10. There was also a problem on discipline in the Church. Some Christians started quarrelling amongst themselves, others dressing indecently in public places and places of worship.
11. Some people started doubting and denying the resurrection of Christ and that of believers.
12. Because the Gospel message was orally preached, there came a problem of forgetting what was preached.
13. There were controversies about the position of women in the Church especially on leadership.
14. There also erupted another problem concerning spiritual gifts. Those who had these gifts started boasting over those who lacked them especially in Corinth.
15. Eventually there was a problem of discrimination, segregation e.g. in the celebration of the Lord's supper, treating the poor with prejudice in Church worship, etc.
16. There was a problem of illiteracy. Very few people knew how to read or write. Most of the scriptures that had been written meant nothing for those who could not read them.
17. The delay of Paraousia also posed several problems. Some people gave up thinking that Jesus had lied to them.
18. There arose a problem of immorality amongst Christians. This immorality had been occasioned by the influence of the Greek philosophical influence of the dual existence of the body. This to some extent hampered the spread of the Good News.
19. There was also a problem of marriage amongst the Christians and non-believers. This created a problem of backsliding of some Christians.

ATTEMPTS MADE BY THE CHURCH TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS

1. The early Christians carried out instructions either through writing or using emissaries thereby solving the problem of indiscipline. For example, Paul wrote to the Corinthians advising them on how to live good Christian life.
2. St Paul defended his apostolic authority through preaching and writing thereby solving the problem of being doubted by early Christians.
3. Letters were written so as to solve the problem of backsliding where Christians were given proper guidelines on proper ways of worship, on marriage and sharing of riches (cf James' teachings).
4. In attempting to solve the problem of leadership in the Church, different Christians were gradually given specific roles. For example, the book of Acts gives the seven deacons.
5. All Christian preachers started inculcating the virtues of unity through their teachings e.g. St Paul wrote to the Corinthians castigating disunity caused by the sprinter groups in I Cor 1-4.
6. On opposition from the Jews the Church struggled to explain "*On what makes a Christian a true Christian*" James and Paul agreed that it is faith than the law that saves, soon the Jews understood this.
7. Regarding persecution, the Church encouraged the suffering Christians to have faith, endure, Peter wrote letters to the suffering Christians. Eventually people got the courage to withstand suffering.
8. The early church went on to encourage the sharing of property especially the richer converts were encouraged to sell off their property and the proceeds would be shared to benefit the poor. Alms were also collected to assist the poor thereby solving the problem of poverty.
9. The Church also always referred to the life of Christ. This solved the problems of dishonesty, quarrels, persecution, jealousy, etc.
10. There was also emphasis on love of one another. This solved most problems that were wrecking relationships amongst Christian communities.
11. Various solutions and scholarly discoveries were made to solve the synoptic problem. Although, this remained controversial, the Christians became enlightened on what causes such disagreements and agreements between the Gospel writers.
12. Christians were also encouraged to forgive and share each other's burdens.
13. The Christian Church started spreading to many parts of the world- far from Palestine. This solved the problem of persecution in the Roman Empire.
14. The early Church members started writing letters to different Churches, appointing local church leaders to manage church affairs. This solved the problem of tiresome missionary journeys.
15. The dangers of heretics, and gnostics, disbelief on resurrection were solved by the apostle's personal testimonies.
16. The apostles decided to compile the Gospels in order to avoid forgetting and make the Kerygma reach as many areas as soon as possible.
17. Christians indulged themselves in prayer in order to strengthen their faith and in so doing, God sent them the power of the Holy Spirit that guided them.
18. Again, they started self sustaining projects e.g. St Paul started self-help project of tent making.
19. To eradicate the problem of illiteracy, the Church educated masses. This was done through catechetical schools where reading, writing and later on, interpretation of Biblical scriptures was taught to the converts.

20. The threat of the heretics and other saboteurs was solved by putting up the criteria upon which genuine books of the New testament would be judged. Thus the confusion of the unreligious books was eradicated.
21. As the Church continued to expand, the order of worship (liturgy) was put in place to assist the scattered Christians all over the world.
22. The problem of Gospel distortion was solved by organising some days for Bible studies which gave a proper interpretation of the scriptures.
23. To reduce the problem of over-dependence and burdening of the Church, some apostles like Paul surrendered their lives for the sake of the Gospel.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Q: (a) Examine the problems encountered by the Christians of the early church in spreading the Gospel.

(b) How did the Church attempt to solve them ?