

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

FORM ONE

Introduction

The word BIBLE comes from TWO languages: **Latin** and **Greek**.

In Greek the word Bible is in plural, '**ta biblia'** which means the **books**. When this word was taken over *into Latin* it was in singular term, ***Biblos or Bible***. This means that the Bible is not a single book but a collection of different works /books written by different people. Hence, the Bible contains many books put together into one big book. The Bible is a sacred book to the Jews and to the Christians.

Definition of the Bible

Therefore the Bible can be defined as *a collection of books containing the word of God, written by different people through inspiration of God for our salvation*.

1. **Collection of books**-inside the Bible, we will find many books collected together. Such books include *The Book of Genesis, the Book of Joshua, The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, the Book of Ruth, the Gospel according to Luke e.t.c*, hence, it is a library of books. The Bible contains 66 books.
2. **Containing the words of God**-the Bible is the word of God set down in writing. Because of this, it is also called the Holy Scripture or scripture.
3. **Written by different people**- The books of the Bible were written by many different authors, in different places and in different times. In general the books of the Bible began to be written around 900 BC to 100 AD. Some of the places where these books were written include, Palestine, Babylon, Egypt, Rome, Corinth e.t.c. Most of the people who wrote these books were Jews, while others are not known. Some books are named after men and some are named after women. For example, Moses is believed to have written the first five books of the Bible of Old Testament. Books like Ruth, Esther Judith are named after women. Paul wrote many books which are also letters. Examples include the letter to the Corinthians, the letter to the Romans e.t.c.

NB: Both the Jews and Christians use the Bible. But the order as well as the number of books differs between the **Jewish Bible** and **Christian Bible**. The Jews have 24 books in their Bible. Even among the Christians the order and the number differs. This means the **Protestant Bible** and **Roman Catholic Bible** differs. Catholics have 73 Books while Protestants have 66 books. Catholic version includes books which are also called 'deuterocanonical' from a Greek "second canon." These include: *Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), I Maccabees, II Maccabees*, parts of *Daniel* and parts of *Esther*.

Division of the Bible

The Bible has **66 books**. These books are divided into two main divisions/sections called **Old Testament** and **New Testament**. A **testament** is a written document that bears a testimony to the covenant (agreement). A **covenant** is a serious agreement/promise between two parties/sides that were separated before. Usually a covenant has a promise.

Therefore, the **Old Testament** was a covenant between God and Israel. It was done at Mt. Sinai through Moses.

The **New Testament** is a covenant between God and all nations (all people). It was done through Jesus Christ at Golgotha (Calvary).

DIVISION OF OLD TESTAMENT (OT)

Old Testament organizes the books according to their type of literature:

1. **The Torah (Pentateuch/Law)** they are **five** in number - *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy* . These books are also called Torah because they teach people about the Law. (Torah is a Hebrew word which means, "law" or "doctrine"). Just because they are five they are

- also called Pentateuch (Greek *penta*, “five”; *teuch*, books/volumes”). These books are believed to have been written by Moses.
2. **Historical books**- they are 12 in number. These are *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel. I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther*. These books explain the history of Israel first those that concern the past; then, the present; and then, the future.
 3. **Wisdom/ poetry books**-they are five in number. These are: *Job, Psalms, Songs of Songs, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*. They speak about advice and how to live a good life. They also speak about the danger of not following the advice. Some of these books have songs.
 4. **The prophets**-they are 17 in number. These books contain the teachings of different prophets. They are divided into minor and major prophets.
 - a) **Minor Prophets**-they are 12 in number. These are *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Jonah, Micah, Zechariah and Malachi*.
 - b) **Major Prophets**-They are 5 in number. *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentation, Ezekiel and Daniel*.

Division of New Testament (NT)

The New Testament has 27 books. These Books are divided into **four** categories.

1. **The Gospels** (good news).

The word Gospel is derived from the Old English *godspel* (good tidings), which is a rendering of the Greek *evangelion* (good news). These books deal with the life, the person, and the teachings of Jesus, as he was remembered by the Christian community. They are four in number: **Matthew, Mark, Luke and John**. The first **three** Gospels (**Matthew, Mark, and Luke**) are called the **Synoptic Gospels** (Greek *synoptikos*, “viewing at a glance”) This is so because they provide the same general view of the life and teaching of Jesus. They narrate almost the same incidents, often agreeing in the order of events, and use similar phrasing.

NB: The Gospel of **John** is attributed to John the Evangelist. This book differs in many respects from the Synoptics. Several incidents mentioned in John do not occur in any of the Synoptics, and others recorded in the Synoptics are not recorded in John. Also, some of the events common to all of the Gospels appear in a different order in John's narrative. The Gospel of John was written after the Synoptic Gospels.

2. **Acts of the Apostles**. The book of Acts carries the story of Christianity/Gospel from the Resurrection of Jesus in Jerusalem to the end of the world. At the centre of this book are the two apostles: Peter and Paul. In short, Acts is the story of the development of the Christian church under the impulse of the Holy Spirit.
3. **The Letters or Epistles** (Greek *epistellein*, “to send to”)-it was a formal and instructive letter, often intended for publication .They are **21 letters**. All these letters are correspondence by various leaders of the early Christian church. The letters were going to different churches and other people. Chief among them was the Apostle Paul (who wrote almost 13 letters), applying the message of the church to the sundry needs and problems of early Christian congregations. The remaining others were written by other apostles.
4. **The Book of Revelation** (the Apocalypse). This is the last book of the New Testament. It is rich in allegory and continues to be the subject of widely divergent interpretations. It is the only book of the New Testament classified as apocalyptic literature. It uses visions, symbols, and allegory, especially in connection with future events. The book is sometimes called the Apocalypse. Both English titles are derived from the first word in the Greek original, *apokalypsis* (revelation).

LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

Most of the books of the **Old Testament** were Witten in **Hebrew language**, while the **New Testament** was written in **Greek**.

Literary forms of the bible

This is the kind of literature which authors used to write the books of the bible. In other words, different authors had different ways of thinking and writing these books. Though the authors wrote in their own styles, but they wrote what God wanted them to write. For example

1. **Stories or narratives**. Some authors wrote these books in a form of stories. They did this to show God's work on behalf of his people. This shows that God can intervene in the course of human history.
2. **Poetry or songs**. Poets express sorrows, plight of the people and the hope people have in God. Other songs such as psalms can be used as hymns.
3. **Oracles**. This is a speech made by a prophet on behalf of God. An oracle begins like this. '*The Lord says.....*' or '*thus says the Lord*'. Oracles are in three forms:
 - Woe oracles-they are there to announce punishment (Amos 8:7-10).
 - Promise oracles-announces blessings (Zechariah 8: 14-17) (Jeremiah 31:1-6)
 - Lawsuit oracles-denounces evil (Isaiah 3:16-18)
4. **Parables**. These are short stories taken from human experience to teach spiritual truth. Every parable has a lesson to teach the hearers. Thus include changing one from being a bad person to a good person. i.e. lesson from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 12 : 16-21)

Importance of reading the bible

- It helps one to understand God and our responsibility towards the creation
- It helps one to live and act in a good way¹.
- It helps one to learn how to talk to God in prayer.
- It helps one to know the truth not to be mislead by others.²

The Book of Genesis

The name Genesis means 'origin' or 'beginning.' This is the first book of the Bible. It tells us of the beginning of the world from the time when "God created the heaven and the earth" (1:1) until the death of Joseph, the 11th son of the Hebrew patriarch Jacob (chapters 37–50). The book falls into **two** parts.

The first part (chapters 1-11) is concerned with the primeval history of humankind and contains stories about the first man and the first woman, their disobedience, the first murderer and his victim, the flood that God sent to destroy all things save the immediate family of one "just man" (6:9) and the creatures committed to him for preservation, and the confounding of the speech and scattering abroad of later people. The first part of Genesis also contains the first covenant made by God with humanity in the person of Noah (9:9-17).

¹ **II Timothy 3: 16-17**-Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

² **Psalms 1:1**-How happy is the one who does not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand in the pathway with sinners, or sit in the assembly of arrogant fools!

The second part (chapters 12-50) is mainly an account of the lives of the Hebrew **patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph**, that is, a history of the origins of the Hebrew nation.

The patriarchs

A **patriarch** is the Biblical figure who is regarded as a father of the human race. Sometimes, the word patriarch is also used to mean the head of a family, clan or tribe. Patriarchs were like kings because they had to make major decisions such as moving from one place to another and if a patriarch has chosen a certain god, the whole clan or tribe would adopt that god.

Biblical patriarchs such as **Abraham, Isaac** and **Jacob** are called the ancestors of the Israelites. These ancestors played a great role in the history of the Israelites. The Israelites call these ancestors their fathers because of:

1. Their physical link with them
2. The promises God made to these ancestors were foundations of the nation of Israel.

Important events in the lives of the patriarchs

- a) The call of Abraham
- b) Acts of faith of Abraham
- c) The covenant of God with Abraham
- d) The test to offer Isaac as a sacrifice
- e) The dream of Jacob at Bethel
- f) The selling of Joseph into Egypt
- g) The governorship of Joseph in Egypt.

ABRAHAM

He is the progenitor (originator) of the Hebrews, who probably lived in the period between 2000 and 1500 BC.

At first he was called '**Abram**' which means '*exalted father*.' Later his name was changed to '**Abraham**' which means '*the father of nations*.'

THE FATHER OF ABRAHAM (Genesis 11: 26-32)

Abraham was the son of **Terah**, a descendant of Shem, and was born in the city of Ur of the Chaldeans, where he married his half sister Sarai. Ur was an important city of ancient southern Mesopotamia (Sumer). Terah belonged to a nomadic tribe, meaning that he moved from place to place with animals.

Terah had **three** sons:

1. Abram-had a wife, Sarah, but was barren.
2. Nahor-had a wife, Michal, the daughter of Haran
3. Haran-had a wife who bore him a daughter and a son, Lot.

The people of Ur worshipped the moon and gave human sacrifices. Haran died in Ur, then, Terah migrated to Haran (that was around 1800 BC- Haran is also called Paddan Aram). In Haran, Terah died at the age of 205. After the death of Terah, God called Abram in Haran.

The call of Abram and his journey to Canaan (Genesis 12:1-19)

God called Abram when he was 75 years. Abram was told to leave his country, relatives and go to the Promised Land which God would show him. God also promised him blessings and many descendants. In faith and obedience Abram went though he did not know the way. Abram took Sarai, Lot, his slaves and his possessions. Before reaching the southern part of Canaan, Abram passed through three areas:

1. Shechem

2. Bethel
3. Negeb

In all these places, Abram built altars and these places became shrines. At Shechem God appeared to him and promised him three things:

- a) Land of his own
- b) A son as an heir
- c) Many descendants

The people of Canaan allowed Abram to settle there because of two reasons:

- They both belonged to the same race
- Abram was a shepherd who could not use the land which the Canaanites used for farming.

When Abram got settled in Canaan, he had a son from the slave girl from Egypt. The slave girl was Hagar. The son was named Ishmael.

Later, Abram and Lot separated because:

- ✓ There was no enough land for grazing their animals
- ✓ Their herdsmen quarreled.

Lot chose **Jordan Valley** which was close to two cities: Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot chose this valley because it was well watered. Abram chose **Hebron**.

Lessons from the background of Abram

- God communicates with people
- God took the initiative to improve the broken relationship with people
- Faith has to be shown through good actions
- God works through people of faith.
- God expects people to obey Him.

The covenant between God and Abram (Gen. 17:1-26; 18: 1-15)

A covenant is a serious agreement between two or more parties who were separated before. A covenant consists of promises, signs and ceremonies. Abram was 99 years old when God made a covenant with him.

Promises of God to Abram (Gene. 17: 1-9)

- a) God would bless Abram, thus, he will look after him spiritually and physically.
- b) He will make his name great
- c) He will make him a great nation
- d) God will give Canaan to his descendants
- e) God will produce a king from the descendants of Abram.

Signs of the covenant

To prove that the promises will happen, God gave Abram several signs:

- ❖ The **countless stars in the sky** (Gene. 15:5-6). Many stars illustrate or show that Abram will have many descendants numerous to be counted.
- ❖ **Changing of names.** To indicate the beginning of new life, the names of Abram and Sarai were changed:
 -*Abram to Abraham* (which means *Father of the Nations*)-Gen.17:4-5
 -*Sarai to Sarah* (which means *Mother of the nations*)-Gen. 17: 15-16

- ❖ **The fire and flaming torch** (Gene. 15:17-18). The fire passed in between the pieces of meat. This symbolized that if Abraham fails to keep the covenant, he will die just like the animals which he sacrificed.
- ❖ **Circumcision** (Gen. 17: 9-12). Circumcision is the surgical removal of all or part of the foreskin (prepuce) of the human male penis. A male Jewish baby would be circumcised 8 days after birth to indicate that he belongs to the people of God.

Ceremony of the covenant

This is where God took the initiative to reconcile people to Himself. God in a form of smoking fire, pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces of meat as Abraham observed.

The birth of Isaac (Gene.21: 1-8)

Isaac was born when Sarah was 90 years old and Abraham was 100 years old. Isaac means, 'laughter.' The name was given because of two reasons:

- I. God had brought 'laughter and joy' to Sarah
- II. Abraham and Sarah 'laughed' when God told them that they are going to have a son. (C.F Gen. 17:17; 18: 12)

The test to offer Isaac (Gen. 21: 1-9)

Later, God wanted to test Abraham's obedience. God commanded Abraham to sacrifice the boy. Abraham made all the preparations for the ritual sacrifice. Indeed, God tested Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice his beloved son. At the last moment, after God was convinced of the perfect obedience of both father and son, he accepted a ram as a substitute for the youth.

The offering was supposed to take place at **Mt. Moriah**. With faith and obedience, Abraham obeyed. The place which Abraham wanted to sacrifice his son, Isaac, was named, '*The Lord Provides*.' This is so because God provided a sheep (lamb) to be sacrificed instead of Isaac.

From this incident, we learn that:

- I. God expects obedience and trust from people.
- II. God does not want human sacrifice like the gods of the moon worshippers.
- III. God created human life and wants to preserve it.
- IV. God can test a person.
- V. We are justified (declared righteous) before God if we are responsible like Abraham.

Summary of acts of faith of Abraham

- A. He obeyed God to go to the unknown land, since; he believed that God would take care of him.
- B. He believed in God that He will give him a child in spite of his old age.
- C. He circumcised his son Isaac and himself to show that he belonged to God in a special way.
- D. He obeyed God when he was told to offer his son as a sacrifice. Actually God wanted to see if Abraham indeed feared Him or if he is committed to him.

In search of a wife for Isaac: Isaac marries Rebecca (Gen. 24: 1-67)

Abraham was old and wanted Isaac to marry a woman from Haran. This was so because Canaanites women did not know true God (Yahweh). **Eliezer** was sent to Haran to search a wife of Isaac. Eliezer prayed

for a success that any woman who will give water to him and his animals will be a wife of Isaac. Rebecca fulfilled the prayer and was taken to Canaan. Sarah died at the age of 127 and Abraham died at the age of 175. Both were buried in the same cave called Machpelah.

Isaac after Abraham's death: the birth of Esau and Jacob (Gene. 25: 19-34)

The family of Isaac and Rebecca took 20 years without a child. Isaac prayed and God answered him. Rebecca conceived the twins. The struggling in Rebecca's womb means:

- i. Two rival nations in her womb (Israel and Edomites)
- ii. The older will serve the younger-Esau will save Jacob.

The first to born was red and hairy and was named Esau. The second was smooth and he gripped the heel of Esau and was named Jacob. Esau was a hunter and brought food at home, while Jacob helped in household chores. This made Isaac to love Esau while Rebecca loved Jacob. Esau was also called Edom and his descendants were called Edomites. Jacob was also called Israel and his descendants were called Israelites.

Isaac blesses Jacob instead of Esau (Gen. 27: 1-45)

Isaac was deceived because Jacob put skins of goat on his smooth parts. The blessings were in two parts:

- i. Agriculture blessings to Jacob.
- ii. Jacob will dominate Esau.

The anger of Esau and how he displeased his father

Esau wanted to kill Jacob. This made Rebecca to tell Jacob to flee to Haran for two reasons:

- To avoid Esau from killing Jacob
- She wanted Jacob to marry there.

Esau also displeased his parents by marrying two Canaanites women, who did not know the true God of Israel. This action showed his lack of interest in God's covenant blessings (Gene. 26: 35).

Lessons from the story of Jacob

- ✓ Every deceitful action has consequences. Jacob paid for his cheating, since, he had to flee from his home and stayed in exile for 20 years.
- ✓ Spiritual success must be gained by righteous means and not by manipulation.

The flight of Jacob to Haran and his dream at Bethel (Gen. 28: 10-22)

On his way to Haran, Jacob spent a night at Bethel (house of God). In a dream he saw:

- 1) A stair way reaching from earth to heaven
- 2) On it angels were going up and coming down
- 3) The Lord stood beside him

God brought a message that the blessings promised to Abraham would be carried out through him. These were:

- Many descendants
- To have the land of Canaan
- Through him others would be blessed.

NB: for these promises to be fulfilled, Jacob had to live a life of trust and obedience.

Jacob at Haran: children born to Jacob (Gen. 29: 1-30; 30: 1-24)

Laban³ had two daughters:

- Leah and
- Rachael

Arriving at his uncle [Laban's](#) home in Haran, Jacob fell in love with his cousin [Rachel](#). He worked for her father, Laban, for **seven years** to obtain Rachel's hand in marriage, but then Laban substituted his older daughter, [Leah](#), for Rachel at the wedding ceremony (Laban deceived him by sending in the "tender-eyed" Leah ("tender-eyed" is an uncertain phrase, possibly denoting poor vision). Unwittingly married to Leah, Jacob was thus compelled to serve Laban for another **seven years** so that he could take his beloved Rachel as his wife as well. Jacob then served Laban for another **six years**, during which he amassed a large amount of property. Because of this trickery, even after he married Rachel, Jacob did not love Leah, but God consoled her with children before allowing Rachel to become pregnant.

In short, Rachael was barren at the beginning of the marriage while Leah had children. Jacob also married the two servants of Rachael and Leah, whose names were **Bilhah** and **Zilpah**. This means Jacob had four wives. During the 20 the 20 years that Jacob stayed in Haran he became very rich and had eleven sons and one daughter (Dinah). The last born son of Jacob, Benjamin was born after Jacob left Haran. Therefore, Jacob had **twelve sons**. In summary, Jacob had 13 children, 10 of whom were founders of tribes of Israel. This is so because Rachel's sons **Benjamin** and **Joseph** (who did not found a tribe, but whose sons founded the tribes of *Manasseh* and *Ephraim*).

Summary of the sons of Jacob

WIFE			
LEAH	First Wife	Had 6 sons & and one daughter (Dinah)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reuben - Simeon - Levi (who did not found a tribe, but was the ancestor of the Levites). - Judah (from whom a tribe and the Davidic monarchy were descended) - Issachar and - Zebulun.

³(Genesis 24 and 29-31), Laban was a grandson of **Nahor**. **Nahor** was Abraham's brother. Laban lived in Haran, where his ancestors had made their home. His sister, **Rebekah**, married Isaac, Abraham's son. Both of Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachel, married Jacob, Isaac's son, and Jacob served Laban as a shepherd for 14 years in recompense. Laban's sons became envious of Jacob's increasing wealth, which he had gained through the selective breeding of his flocks. As Laban's attitude grew hostile, Jacob and his family departed in secret for Canaan.

RACHAEL	Second Wife	Had 2 sons	- Benjamin and - Joseph (who did not find a tribe, but whose sons founded the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim).
ZILPAH	Leah's Slave	Had 2 sons	- Gad and - Asher
BILHAH	Rachael's' Slave	Had 2 sons	- Dan and Naphtali

He then set out with his wives and children to return to Palestine. Jacob left Haran because of:

1. Laban changed his attitude towards Jacob. For example, Laban cheated Jacob of his wages ten times.
2. The jealousy of the sons of the Laban.
3. The Lord told him to do so.

On the way to Palestine, Jacob wrestled with a mysterious stranger, a divine being, who changed Jacob's name to **Israel**, which means, '*He who struggles with God*' (Gen. 30: 14:-24). Jacob then met and was reconciled with Esau and settled in Canaan.

NB: Leah died in Canaan and was buried in Machpelah-she was buried in Hebron on the west bank of the Jordan River. (see Genesis 49:31). Rachael died in Canaan after giving birth to Benjamin.

The story of Joseph and his brothers (Gen. 37: 1-11)

Joseph was hated by his brothers because:

1. Joseph was reporting bad stories of his brothers to Jacob.
2. Jacob loved Joseph than his brothers. This was seen when Joseph was given a beautiful robe which had many beautiful colors.
3. Joseph had **two dreams** which symbolized that he will be a ruler over his brothers.

The dreams of Joseph

- a) The first was of sheaves of corn. The sheaf of Joseph stood up and the rest of the sheaves gathered around his sheaf and bowed to it.
- b) The second was of heavenly bodies. He saw the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down to him.

Joseph is sold to Egypt (Gen. 37: 12-36)

At Dothan, the brothers sold Joseph to the Ishmaelite traders who sold him in Egypt. The brothers lied to Jacob that Joseph has been killed by a wild animal. They proved this by showing the robe of Joseph that was dipped in the blood of a goat that they killed. Jacob tore and mourned for Joseph. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Joseph was bought by Potiphar as a slave.

Joseph in the house of Potiphar (Gen. 39: 1-23)

In Potiphar's house, Joseph showed administrative skills and God was with him. However, Joseph was falsely accused by the wife of Potiphar. Joseph was accused of:

1. That he wanted to rape her.
2. That he was insulting the household of Potiphar.

Joseph was imprisoned and he suffered for two years. In prison, God was with him and was given the gift of interpreting dreams. For example, he interpreted the dreams of the ‘chief cup bearer’ and the ‘chief baker.’

Joseph interprets the dreams of the pharaoh (Gen. 41: 1-36)

Joseph successfully interpreted the pharaoh’s dreams and this gained him freedom from prison.

The two dreams of the pharaoh’s:

- i. Seven fat cows were swallowed by seven thin cows.
- ii. Seven good heads of grain were swallowed by the seven heads of grain.

The meaning was that there would be seven years of abundance which would be followed by seven years of severe famine.

Joseph is made governor over Egypt (Gen. 41: 37-5)

The pharaoh was impressed with Joseph’s ability to interpret the dreams. The pharaoh appointed Joseph to be a governor over all Egypt and that he will be in charge of the food in Egypt. Joseph became second in command to pharaoh. By then, he was 30.

Other things given to Joseph to symbolize his position:

- ring of the pharaoh
- fine linen robes
- Golden chain around his neck
- wife named ‘Potiphera’- who gave birth to two sons; Manasseh and Ephraim.
- new name, ‘Zaphenathpaneah.’

Lessons from the life of Joseph

1. God works through circumstances and even through evil actions of other people to accomplish good. For example, God worked through Joseph to preserve His covenant.
2. We should trust God though we are in problems.
3. We should be people of integrity and principles even during tough moments

Joseph and his brothers meet (Gen. 42-45)

These chapters can be divided into three parts:

- I. First encounter of Joseph and his brothers where Joseph accused his brothers of being spies.
- II. Second encounter where Joseph accused the brothers for stealing a silver cup.
- III. Joseph reveals himself.

Joseph then, invites his brothers to come in Egypt. This fulfils what God promised Abraham that his family would reside in Egypt for 400 before being given the Promised Land. (Gen. 15: 13)

Jacob and his family settle in Egypt (Gen. 46: 1-34)

The relatives of Joseph settled in the district of Goshen. The pharaoh gave this land because the brothers were shepherd. In total, they were 70 members who came from Canaan to Egypt. In this land, the Israelites multiplied and became a large nation.

The death of Jacob and Joseph (Gen. 49: 29-50; 50: 22-28)

Before dying, Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 48:1-10).

Jacob died at the age of 140 and was buried in the cave of Machpelah in Canaan. Joseph died at the age of 110 and was buried in Egypt and later, he was buried at Shechem in Canaan (Joshua 24: 32).

The period of the patriarchs closes with the death of Joseph.

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Exodus means, ‘*going out*’ or ‘*departure*’ from Egypt. It is the second book of the Bible; it was named Exodus because it relates the departure of the Israelites from Egypt and their wanderings through the desert up to Mount Sinai. Exodus begins with Israel in Egypt and their oppression by a cruel Pharaoh. The central figure is Moses.

The contents of the book may be summarized thus:

- (1) Israel in Egypt,
- (2) The Exodus and wanderings,
- (3) The Covenant at Sinai,
- (4) The apostasy of the people and renewal of the Covenant, and
- (5) The instructions on building the Tabernacle and their execution.

Hebrew slavery in Egypt (Exodus 1: 1-22)

The new king of Egypt was afraid that the Israelites might join the enemies and destroy Egypt. So he came up with three ways of reducing their population and also to make them weak:

1. Hard work or forced labour in a form of:
 - i. Field work.
 - ii. Moulding bricks.
 - iii. Building the two cities of Egypt, Pithom and Ramses.
2. Male babies were killed by midwives from Egypt whose names were Shiphrah and Puah.
3. Male babies were thrown into Nile River.

The birth of Moses (Ex. 2: 1-10)

Moses was born when the edict of throwing male babies into Nile River was declared. The father of Moses was Amram from the tribe of Levi and his mother was Jochebed. Moses was the third child after Aaron and Miriam. Moses was hidden in a basket which was put on the water of Nile River. The baby was picked up by the daughter of Pharaoh who came to bathe. The daughter of the pharaoh named the child ‘Moses’, which means ‘to pull out.’ Or ‘taken from.’ This was so because Moses was taken out of water. Moses grew up and was educated as a royal child.

Most likely Moses was about 25 when he took the inspection tour among his people. There he saw the oppressive measures under which they laboured. When he found an Egyptian taskmaster beating a Hebrew, probably to death, he could control his sense of justice no longer. After checking to make sure that no one was in sight, he killed the tough Egyptian overlord. As a prince in the court, Moses was probably in excellent physical condition, and apparently he knew the latest methods of combat.

The flush of victory pulled Moses back the next day. He had removed one threat to his people and was determined to assist them again. This time, however, he found two Hebrews fighting. After parting them, he questioned the offender in an attempt to mediate the disagreement. Two questions jolted him: “Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” The confidence of the self-appointed deliverer turned into fear. One of his own knew his “secret” and soon Pharaoh would, too. Realizing that he would have to flee, he fled to Midian (mainly in northwest

Arabia).where he married Zipporah the daughter of Jethro (Reuel). Jethro was a midian priest. Zipporah had two sons: Gershom and Eliezer.

The call of Moses and his commission (Ex. 3: 1-22)

Moses was called when he was taking care of sheep of his father in law (Jethro), near Mt. Sinai (Mt. Horeb). God appeared to him in a burning bush but the bush was not consumed. Moses took off his sandals for the place he was standing was holy. Then, Moses covered his face.

Moses gave four excuses trying to dodge the mission of releasing the Israelites from the Egyptian slavery. The four objections of Moses were:

- i. He was nobody to approach the pharaoh.
- ii. He did not know the name of the God who is sending him. God said his name is 'I AM WHO I AM OR YAHWEH.
- iii. He was afraid that people will not believe him.
- iv. He did not know how to speak well.

Lessons from the call of Moses:

- With God we can achieve great things
- Though we can have weaknesses, God can transform us to be leaders.
- It is possible to leave our careers and save God.
- God intervenes to help his people who are suffering.

The work of Moses: the Miracles of Moses (Ex. 7-12:51)

God knew that the pharaoh would be stubborn to release the Israelites. So he sent 10 plagues (disasters) to force him to release the Israelites. This was indeed the battle between Yahweh and the Pharaoh.

Things to note:

- i. Plagues did not affect the land of Goshen
- ii. The magicians of pharaoh reproduced some of the plagues : snakes, blood and frogs, but failed to reproduce the rest.
- iii. The pharaoh was reversing his decision as soon as the plague has stopped.
- iv. The last plague (10th plague) forced the pharaoh to release the Israelites.

The ten plagues are as follows:

1. Blood for seven days
2. Frogs everywhere
3. Gnats which attacked people and animals
4. Flies that covered the whole land
5. Death of animals
6. Fever boils on humans and people
7. Thunder and hail that killed people and animals and destroyed crops / plants.
8. Locusts that ate any green pasture
9. Darkness for three days
10. Death of first born son of people and animals.

Events surrounding the tenth plague.

Before the last plague, God introduced two rites to the Hebrews; which were interconnected;

- i. The pass-over lamb
- ii. The rite of the unleavened bread.

The lamb had to be roasted and eaten with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs. The blood of the lamb had to be smeared on the door post as a sign to the angel of death not to kill anyone in the house which had blood on the door post.

The ceremony was called '*pass-over*' because the angel of death passed over their houses.

The Hebrew were told to be ready by:

1. *Eating their food while standing.*
2. *Carrying sticks in their hands.*
3. *Had to put their sandals on the foot.*

That night, the angel of death came and struck down all the first born sons of Egyptians starting with the child of pharaoh. The pharaoh released all the Israelites. This going out of the Israelites out of Egypt is called Exodus.

The Israelites had been in Egypt as slaves for 430 years. The Israelites also carried the bones of Joseph (**Gen. 50:25/Joshua 24: 32**)

The exodus and the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. 14: 1-31)

Through this journey, the presence of God was shown through:

- i. The cloud by day
- ii. The pillar of fire during night

The pharaoh soon reversed his mind and he organized the army to turn back the Israelites. This time, the Israelites were near the Red Sea.

God told Moses to stretch out his arm over the sea. The sea got divided into two halves and the Israelites crossed on dry ground. The Egyptians in hot pursuit tried to use the same path. Moses stretched his hand over the sea again and it flowed back drowning the Egyptians.

The journey to Mt. Sinai and the life of the Hebrews in the desert.

The life was tough in the desert. The Israelites complained that they do not have food and water.

- a) **Manna and the quails (Ex. 16: 1-36)**

In the desert of Sin, God gave them two kinds of food; **manna** and **quails**.

Manna had to be eaten at morning as breakfast. Each had to collect what he/she can eat on that day, otherwise, it bred worms and became foul. Only on the sixth day, people had to collect twice. Manna had to be collected in the morning because it was melting as the sun was rising. Quails (birds) had to be eaten at evening as super. The Israelites ate Manna for 40 years until they reached Canaan.

- b) **Water from the rock (Ex. 17: 1-7)**

At a place called **Rephidim**, water came out from the rock after Moses struck the rock with his stick. That place was called '*Massah and Meribah*'. Just because the Israelites tested and quarreled with God: '*Massah*' means to **test** and '*Meribah*' means to quarrel.

The Israelites at Mt. Sinai: The covenant and the giving of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 19: 1-22)

At Mt. Sinai, Moses made three round trips from the camp to mountain to meet God. God wanted to come down/descent and renew the covenant with His people. Therefore, the people had to purify themselves to meet God.

How will the people purify themselves? (**Ex. 19: 9b, 15**)

- i. Had to wash their clothes
- ii. Had to stop having sexual intercourse

On the third day, God descended on Mt. Sinai. The coming and appearance of God is called '*Theo-phany*'. The Theophany was accompanied by, thunder, lightings, thick cloud, smoke, loud trumpet blast. The

whole mountain was covered with smoke because God descended in fire. God told Moses that if the Israelites would obey Him and keep His laws they will be His people.

Importance of the covenant at Mt. Sinai

The importance of the covenant was that

- The Israelites would be His own possession from among all people
- They would be a holy nation
- They would be a kingdom of priest

The Israelites promised to obey God and keep His laws. The main sign of the covenant was circumcision.

The giving of the Ten Commandments (Decalogue (Greek *deka logoi*, "10 words")-Ex. 20: 1-17.

These laws were given to the Israelites to help them to live a holy nation. These laws are called the Ten Commandments, 'Decalogue'. According to *Exodus 31:18*, they were inscribed on two stone tablets by God himself. Moses is said to have destroyed the tablets in anger over his people's abandonment of their faith. He was then commanded by God to hew and inscribe new tablets.

Summary of the Decalogue/ Ten Commandments

Exodus 19:16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. *Exodus 20:1* And God spoke all these words, saying:

1. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.
5. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you.
6. You shall not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

The first three commandments deal with one's relations (duty) to God and the last five deal with one's relations to other people. In between these groups there are commandments that deal with one's duty to his parents.

The covenant is sealed (the covenant ceremony)-Ex. 24 : 1-8

The ceremony consisted of setting an altar from twelve stones. The sacrifices of cows were offered and half of the blood was thrown against the altar. After this God called Moses up the Mountain where he stayed for 40 days. Among other things, God told Moses to construct the following:

- i. The Tabernacle.((“the dwelling”)⁴
- ii. The Ark of the Covenant.
- iii. The use of ‘Urim and Thummim.’ (Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8)

The death of Moses (Deuteronomy 34: 1-12)

Before Moses died, God showed him the Promised Land (Canaan) from the Mt. Moab (Nebo or Pisgah). Joshua was chosen as his successor. Moses died at Mt. Nebo at the age of 120 and was buried by God himself. The Israelites mourned for Moses for 30 days.

Lessons from the life of Moses in the way he handled the Israelites in the desert

1. He was patient towards the Israelites.
2. He interceded for the Israelites.
3. He was a man of faith, courage in the face of danger and opposition.
4. In general he was a good leader.

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

This book continues the story of the Israelites on their way to Canaan, but this time under the leadership of Joshua. The name Joshua means ‘**Yahweh saves.**’ God assured Joshua that he is going to be successful if he is going to:

1. Be strong
2. Courageous
3. Faithful to the covenant

Joshua sends spies into Jericho (Joshua 2: 1-24)

Before attacking Jericho, Joshua sent two spies to check the situation of Jericho. The two spies were received and hidden by a prostitute named Rahab when the king of Jericho wanted to capture them. The spies told Rahab to tie a red cord in a window of her house as a sign of his house so that she should be saved.

The entry into the Promised Land and the crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 3: 1-17; 4: 1-24)

a) Instructions on how to cross River Jordan

- The people had to purify themselves.
- The Ark be carried by the priests and have to be in front.
- The people had to follow the Ark.

b) The crossing

The River was cut into two halves when the priests stepped into the river and the Israelites crossed on the dry ground. Among them were 40,000 soldiers ready for war.

c) After crossing

- Twelve stones from the middle of the river were used to make a memorial pillar (monument) to remember how they crossed the river.
- The Israelites were circumcised at Gilgal to symbolize that their enslavement has ended.
- Manna stopped coming.
- They celebrated the first pass over.

⁴ The Tabernacle was constructed of tapestry curtains decorated with cherubim. The interior was divided into two rooms, “the holy place” and “the most holy place” (Holy of Holies). The outer room, or “holy place,” contained the table on which the bread of the Presence (shewbread) was placed, the altar of incense, and the seven-branched candelabrum (menorah). The inner room, or Holy of Holies, was thought to be the actual dwelling place of the God of Israel, who sat invisibly enthroned above a solid slab of gold that rested on the [Ark of the Covenant](#) and had a cherub at each end. This Ark was a gold-covered wooden box containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments.

The capture and fall of Jericho (Joshua 6: 1-27)

The city of Jericho had thick walls and was believed to be protected by the gods of the Canaanites.

Instructions on how to attack Jericho

- The Ark be between the people and the **seven priests** who had the trumpets.
- The group have to go around the city once a day for six days. All this time the trumpets were sounding.
- On the seventh day, they have to march around the city seven times and on the seventh round, the people had to shout saying, ‘The Lord has given you the city.’
- After the fall everything made of silver, gold, bronze/ iron be set apart for the Lord. The soldiers killed everyone except Rahab and her family. The capture of Jericho shows the superiority of Yahweh over the Canaanites gods.

Settlement in Canaan

The conquest of Canaan was not easy because the Israelites had to conquer other hostile tribes who had settled there. These tribes included the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites and the Philistines.

After conquering their areas Joshua divided Palestine among the 12 tribes. There was no capital during those days but Shechem became the meeting place and Shiloh was the place where the Ark was kept.

The death of Joshua

Before Joshua died, he made a farewell speech at **Shechem** where among other things, the covenant was renewed that people will obey God. Joshua died at the age of 110 and was buried at Timnath-serah.

THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES (THE BOOK OF JUDGES)

The Book of Judges falls into three distinct sections. **The first** (1:1-2:5) briefly summarizes the Israelite conquest of Canaan, beginning with Joshua's death. This account differs, however, from the account of the conquest in the Book of Joshua. In the latter, for instance, the Israelite tribes unite under Joshua and conquer or kill all the Canaanites; while in Judges they fight separately for territories that they occupy only partly. This failure to kill or drive out all the former inhabitants of Canaan portends evil for the Israelites (2:1-5).

The **second section** (2:6-16:31) tells of how the children of Israel were several times delivered over to various alien nations, “which the Lord left, to test Israel by them” (3:1), and how each time a hero or heroine appeared to defend the Israelites. These deliverers are described as having judged Israel for a certain number of years. The deliverers, or judges, featured in this part of the book are **Othniel** (3:8-11), **Ehud** (3:12-30), **Shamgar**, Deborah (chap. 4-5), **Gideon**, (chap. 6-8), **Jair**, **Tola**, **Abimelech**, **Jephthah** (10:17-12:7), **Ibzan**, **Elon**, **Abdon** and **Samson** (chap. 13-16).

The **third section** of Judges (chap. 17-21) recounts two stories. The first tells of the migration of the tribe of Dan “to Laish” (18:27). The second is an account of an intertribal war against the tribe of Benjamin; it starts after some Benjaminites abuse a concubine belonging to a Levite.

NB: But we will concentrate ourselves on the second section by looking how the Israelites were delivered from their enemies by various judges.

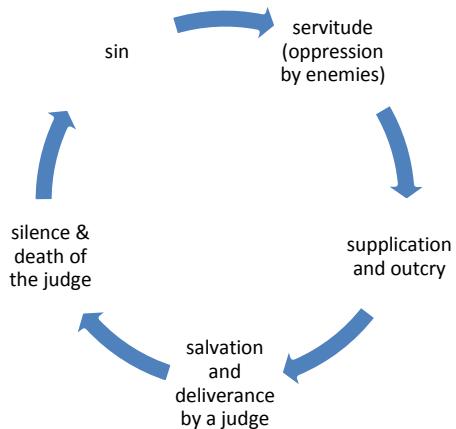
In a general sense therefore, the book of Judges covers the period between the death of Joshua and the first king of Israel. When Joshua died, the new generation started to disobey God and with the city life, they found it hard to acknowledge that Yahweh as the only God who could bring about fertility in

Agriculture. Canaanite religion began to be accepted by the Israelites. This led to religious syncretism: the mixture of worshiping Yahweh as well as the worship of Canaanite gods. This sin made God to withdraw his protection and allowed surrounding nations to trouble and oppress the Israelites.

When the Israelites cried to God for help, God had mercy on them and would raise someone to help them conquer their enemies. These leaders were called the Judges. Therefore, Judges were military leaders and religious leaders who led the struggle against oppressors and also influence the Israelites to stop idol worship. Therefore, the works of the Judges were both military and religious.

In short, the historian emphasized that Israel's subjugation to foreign powers and its loss of freedom and prosperity were caused by the people's worship of Canaanite gods. Recurring throughout the book is the stereotyped formula: "*The people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord . . . and he sold them into the hand of . . .*" After each period of subjection, the historian introduces another formula: "*But when the people of Israel cried to the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer for the people. . .*" Clearly, the historian schematized the accounts of the judges according to an apostasy-deliverance pattern.

A strict pattern was followed in each story of the different judge. It is as follows:



This period of the Judges lasted for about 300 years. In this period, there appeared 14 judges. But we are going to look at four judges only. most judges had specific enemy to deal with. For example:

1. Deborah against the Canaanites.
2. Gideon against the Midianites.
3. Samson against the Philistines.
4. Samuel against the Philistines.

1. DEBORAH AND THE CANAANITES (Judges 4 : 1-24)

Deborah was both a judge and a prophetess meaning that she was correcting abuses and solving grievances. Deborah came from the tribe of Ephraim. During this time, the Canaanites oppressed the Israelites for 20 years. The king of the Canaanites was Jabin and his commander was Sisera. By God's direction, Deborah ordered Barak her commander to raise an army to fight Jabin's forces. Before the battle, Deborah foretold that the glory or victory of the battle will belong to a woman; meaning that Sisera will be killed by a woman.

The battle took place near River Kishon. Deborah provided the spiritual leadership, while Barak provided the military leadership. A great victory was won when the Canaanite chariots were forced down in the flow of the Kishon River, North of Bethel.

Sisera fled to the house of Heber, whose wife was Jael. Jael gave Sisera milk to drink. When Sisera was asleep, Jael took a peg and a hammer and drove it into the head of Sisera and he died. In this way, the prophecy of Deborah was fulfilled. The Israelite army killed Jabin at his capital city, Hazor. Deborah ruled Israel for 40 years then she died.

2. GIDEON AND THE MIDIANITES (Judges 6: 1-40; 7: 1-25)

After the death of Deborah, the Israelites soon forgot God and started to sin against him. God allowed the Midianites and the Eastern people to oppress the Israelites for seven years. The Israelites were troubled in two ways:

- i. They overran Israel at harvest time, stripping them of their grain and cattle.
- ii. The Israelites were hiding in caves.

The call of Gideon (Judges 6: 1-24)

Gideon the son of Joash from Manasseh tribe was threshing wheat secretly. He was stunned when he was chosen to deliver Israel. Gideon gave two excuses:

- i. His clan was the weakest in the tribe of Manasseh.
- ii. He was the least important member in his family.

Gideon prepared meat, bread and broth for the angel to eat. Instead the food was offered to God as a sacrifice. Gideon destroyed the community worship center dedicated to Baal and Asherah at night using two bulls. Now, the angry reaction of people shows Israel was polluted by idolatry.

Gideon was nicknamed Jerubaal, which means, '*Let Baal contend against him.*' Unable to see himself as a deliverer, Gideon proposes two tests with a fleece of wool. God gave Gideon a sign of the dew. The first night, the wool was wet while the area around it was dry. The next night the wool was dry and the area around it was wet.

Empowered by God's Spirit, Gideon took 32,000 soldiers to fight the Midianites. But God reduced the number to 300. When approaching the Midianites camp, they blew trumpets and smashed clay pots (jars) that contained burning torches. The Midianites got confused and they struck each other and fled.

After the victory, the Israelites wanted to crown Gideon as a king which he refused. Only God was supposed to be a king over Israel. Gideon ruled Israel for 40 years, then, he died leaving behind his 70 sons.

3. SAMSON AND THE PHILISTINES (Jug. 13: 1-25; 16 : 4-31)

Before Samson was born the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and God allowed the Philistines to oppress them for 40 years. When Israel was in this stress, Samson was born. Samson would become the strongest person who ever lived on earth. The secret of Samson's power was in his long hair. He had seven locks of hair.

The birth of Samson (Jud. 13: 1-25)

The father of Samson was Manoah from the tribe of Dan. The family had no child before because the wife of Manoah was barren. The birth of Samson was foretold by an angel to his mother. The angel said the child would be a judge and a Nazirite.

Who is a Nazirite?

A Nazirite is someone who is dedicated to the Lord for specific mission. Every Nazirite had to follow **three rules:**

1. Not to drink beer/alcoholic beverages.(had to abstain from alcohol)

2. Not to shave the hair (to let the hair grow)
3. Not to touch a dead body (has to avoid defilement by touching dead bodies/corpses)

NB: God intended that Samson lives a life of high standards as a Nazirite.

Among the ancient Hebrews, a sacred person whose separation was most commonly marked by his uncut hair and his abstinence from wine. Originally, the Nazirite was endowed with special charismatic gifts and normally held his status for life. Later, the term was applied to a man who had voluntarily vowed to undertake special religious observances for a limited period of time, the completion of which was marked by the presentation of offerings (Numbers 6; 1 Maccabees 3:49; Acts 21:24).

The marriages of Samson

Samson married a number of wives:

- i. The first wife was a Philistines woman from Timnah Village.
- ii. The second wife was a philistine woman from the city of Gaza.
- iii. The third wife was also a philistine from the valley of Sorek. Her name was Delilah.

Samson at Gaza (Jud. 16: 1-3)

Here Samson slept with a prostitute. Later he destroyed the city gates and carried them up the top of the mountain.

Samson at Sorek: Samson & Delilah (Jug. 16: 4-31)

Delilah betrayed Samson to the five philistine kings who promised her money if she reveals the secret of Samson. Samson's hair was when he was sleeping on Delilah's thigh. Samson became weak as any man because the shaving of his seven locks of hair meant the transfer of the spirit of the Lord. The philistines gouged out his eyes and took Samson to Gaza to work in prison. In prison, he was made to grind the mill, meanwhile his hair started to grow again.

The death of Samson at Gaza (Jud. 16: 23-31)

Samson died together with more than 3000 people at Gaza. Samson pushed the two pillars of the hall apart and the building collapsed killing everyone in it. The relatives of Samson buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol where Manoah his father was buried. Samson died after judging Israel for 20 years. After him no one was powerful like Samson. He was the strongest man ever lived on earth.

Failures of Samson:

- He did not anchor his life in the world of God. i.e. he ignored God's law of mixed marriages.
- He disregarded the instructions of his parents in order to fulfill his own desires.
- He chose the path that did not please God.

THE BOOK OF RUTH (CHAPTERS 1-4)

The book is named for its central character, a Moabite woman, **Ruth**, who married the son of a Judaean couple living in Moab.

The story happened when the judges ruled Israel. The characters in this book are as follows:

- i. Elimelech & Naomi-parents
- ii. Mahlon & Chilion-the two sons
- iii. Orpah & Ruth-daughters in law.
- iv. Boaz-second husband of Ruth
- v. Obed-the son of Boaz and Ruth

Summary of the book

When famine struck Israel, a certain family which had four members migrated from Bethlehem to Moab. The family members were as follows:

- *Elimelech*-the husband.
- *Naomi*-the wife.

- *Mahlon & Chilion*-the two sons.

While there, the sons of the Judean family marry Moabite women, *Ruth* and *Orpah*. When the father and the two sons die, Naomi, the bereaved mother, determines to return to her home in Bethlehem. She urges her daughters-in-law to remain in Moab with their own people, but one of them, Ruth, insists on returning with Naomi (1:16-17) Ruth told Naomi that:

- Do not ask me to leave you let me go with you.
- Wherever you go, I will go
- Wherever you live I will live
- Your people will be by people
- Your god will be my god.
- Wherever you die I will die
- And that is where I will be buried.

In Bethlehem, Naomi changed her name to' **Marah**' because the *Lord has made her life bitter: She had gone through many problems*. How? She went to Moab full (husband and children) but now she is empty without a husband and a children.

In Bethlehem, Ruth stated to glean in different fields to find food for the day. Ruth's devotion and kindness soon attract the attention of Naomi's near kinsman Boaz (2:1-4:12). Despite the fact that Ruth is a foreigner, Naomi played a role in making sure that Boaz marries Ruth. Indeed, Boaz, a Jew, marries her, and bore **Obed**. In other words, Boaz continued the lineage of Elimelech's sons and preserved the family's land. Obed became the father of Jesse and Jesse was the father of [David](#) of whose family Jesus Christ was born. This is noted in the genealogy given at the beginning of Saint Matthew's Gospel.

Importance and Lessons from the book of Ruth

- It is possible to be a faithful to God even in a foreign land.
- Ruth became the great grandfather of King David through whom Jesus Christ was born.

THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL

The two books of Samuel provided the primary source for the history of Israel during the 11th and 10th centuries BC. These books:

- Contain the history of Samuel, the last judge of Israel and the first of the prophets. In other words they speak about the **rise of prophet hood in Israel**.
- They also speak about the history of the two kings Saul and David. In other words, they speak about the **rise of monarchy/ kingship**.

I Samuel deals with a person named Samuel as both a judge and a prophet.

II Samuel deals with the transfer of kingly power from King Saul to David.

I Samuel

The birth of Samuel and his dedication to God.

The father of Samuel was Elkanah. Elkanah had two wives, whose names were Hannah and Peninnah. Hannah had no children because she was barren, while Peninnah had. Hannah suffered in two ways:

- i. Had no child
- ii. She was mocked by Peninnah.

Hannah vowed that if God would her child, she will dedicate him at the service of God. Elkanah and his two wives used to go to Shiloh to offer sacrifice. The priest in charge of the sanctuary was Eli. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas were also priests.

One day Hannah was praying silently before the Lord and her lips were moving. Eli thought that Hannah was drunk. Hannah explained her suffering and Eli blessed her. The same year Hannah conceived and had a son named, 'Samuel,' which means 'God has heard.' When Samuel was weaned (stopping from breastfeeding), the parents put Samuel in the service of God at Shiloh under the guidance of Eli.

The call of Samuel (I Sam. 3:1-2)

One night God called Samuel four times. At first, Samuel thought it was Eli calling him. It during the third time that Eli realized that God was the one calling the boy. Eli advised Samuel to answer '*speak Lord for your servant is listening.*'

The message which God brought was about the punishment to the sons of Eli and on Eli himself.

Why Punishing Eli and his sons?

- The sons of Eli (Hophni & Phineas) ate meat brought by the people for the sacrifice.
- They took the offering meant for God.
- They slept with women who came to offer the sacrifice.
- Eli as the father did not restrain them.

The two sons of Eli died at the battle between the Philistines and the Israelites. The Ark was also captured. When news reached Eli that the Ark has been captured, he fell down and broke his neck and died. Eli knew that the capture of the Ark meant the departure of God from Israel. Similarly the wife of Phineas who was pregnant went into labour when she heard that the Ark has been captured. She died while giving birth to a son named **Ichabod**, which means the' glory of God has departed from Israel'.

The demand of the people to have a human king: the rise of the monarchy/kingship
(I Sam. 8:1-22)

Samuel was getting old and his work was becoming tough. Then the elders of Israel approached Samuel to give them a human king.

Reasons for the rise of kingship/ monarchy

- The people wanted to be like other nations who had kings.
- The king would rule them and lead them in time of war.
- The people lost confidence in the two sons of Samuel, **Joel** and **Abijah** who were unjust and took bribes. When judging.
- The philistines required a strong leader to fight them and Samuel was getting old.

The idea of having a human king displeased Samuel. Samuel tried to discourage them by giving them the dangers of having a human king.

Reasons against a human king (I Sam. 8: 10-20)

- The king will engage people in forced labour.
- The king will force people to be in his army.
- He will impose taxation on people in order to manage his luxurious courts.
- He will take their daughters to be cooks in his kitchen and some will be making perfumes.
- He will take the best fields for himself and for his commanders by force.

In spite of these warnings, the Israelites insisted that they wanted to have a human king. God told Samuel to do as the people wanted.

Saul chosen and anointed as the first king of Israel: the reign of King Saul (I Sam. 9:1-26).

Saul was the son of a rich man named Kish who was coming from the tribe of Benjamin.. Saul was tall and handsome and had good qualities of leadership. God had already told Samuel about Saul. Samuel and Saul met at Mizpah. Saul was looking for the donkeys that went astray. Saul was anointed by Samuel on his head with oil and the spirit of Lord came and rested upon him. The public acclamation of Saul took place at Mizpah.

Strengths of king Saul.

1. *He fought a successful war against many foreign tribes such as:*
 - The Ammonites (I Sam. 11: 1-11).
 - Amalekites ()
 - Philistines (I Sam. 14: 16-46).

NB: the philistines were a threat to the Israelites because:

- i. The Philistines used chariots and horses.
- ii. The Philistines controlled the supply of military.
- iii. The Philistines controlled agricultural equipments.

2. *King Saul fought against the spread of witchcraft and idolatry in Israel (I Sam. 28:3).*

Weaknesses and mistakes of King Saul

- a) He offered the sacrifice on behalf of the army and on his own behalf instead of waiting for Samuel (I Sam. 13: 1-15). This was wrong because Saul was a priest or a prophet. This scandal happened when Saul was preparing for the battle against the Philistines.
- b) He disobeyed God by not killing the king of the Amalekites and also he kept some livestock of the Amalekites. God told him that he should destroy everything but Saul disobeyed this command.

These mistakes made God to remove him as a king over the 12 tribes of Israel. (I Sam. 15: 29 / I Sam. 15: 34-35)

Lessons people can learn from the mistakes of King Saul.

- God expects people to obey Him despite our status: kings and leaders are also answerable to God.
- Disobedience to God brings trouble and problems.
- People should guard against sin through listening the word of God/ reading the Bible.

David replaces King Saul and his attachment to the kings court (I Sam. 16: 1-23)

God told Samuel to go to Bethlehem to the tribe of Benjamin to anoint David the son of Jesse. Jesse had eight sons and the youngest was David. David was fond of taking care of the sheep of his father Jesse. David was anointed secretly as a second king of Israel. When David was anointed the Spirit of the Lord came on David and the bad spirit came on King Saul which started to trouble Saul. Saul became almost mad. He fell into fits of anger and madness.

To help him the officials suggested to find someone to play a harp (lyre) so that he can feel better. David was chosen and brought into the palace of King Saul to play a lyre. At this time, David was both a musician and the arm bearer of Saul. Through this madness King Saul tried to kill David, but David was evading the trap. Jonathan, the son of King Saul helped David very much not to be killed by his father, Saul.

The death of King Saul (I Sam. 31: 1-13)

Saul committed suicide after mortally wounded in a war against the Philistines. The battle took place at Mt. Gilboa. The three sons of Saul, including Jonathan were killed. King Saul died after ruling Israel for 42 years. The philistines beheaded King Saul and fastened his body on the wall of Beth-Shan. The people of Jabesh Gilead removed the body of Saul and buried him. The surviving son of Saul was Ish-bosheth (Ishbaal).

However, a temporal division occurred among the twelve tribes. The ten tribes from the north chose Ish-bosheth as the king while the two tribes from the south chose David as a king. This led to civil war between the Israelites. The war did not last longer because Ish-bosheth was beheaded.

Summary of King Saul

He was the first king of ancient Israel (reigned about 1020-1000 BC), son of a landowner named Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin. The story of his reign is recounted in 1 Samuel 8-15. The deliverance of the men of Jabesh Gilead (an unidentified city in Gilead) and his victories over the Philistines, Ammonites, and Amalekites attested to Saul's military capacity.

Gradually, however, he began to undergo periods of intense depression, during which he became jealous of David, his future successor as king. These periods culminated in paroxysms (sudden outburst of uncontrollable emotion) of insane rage, which led him to attempt killing David with his own hands and to commit such deeds as the massacre of the 85 priests of Nob.

I Samuel 28 relates how, on the eve of the fateful battle, Saul sought, through a necromancer at Endor, some word of encouragement from the dead Samuel. The oracle of Samuel's ghost, however, could only foretell the doom awaiting on the following day—the defeat of the Israelite forces and the death of Saul and his sons.

Saul fell in a disastrous battle with the Philistines on Mount Gilboa where his three sons also perished. The man best fitted for the job was David. His fourth son, Ish-bosheth, survived into the 10th century BC, but was finally assassinated (see 2 Samuel 2-4).

David then was declared as the only king in the land of Israel. The public declaration took place at Hebron. David was 30 when he became king. He ruled from 1000BC-961 BC. The reign of David is looked upon by the Israelites as the ideal one. David was the man who trusted in God and had faith in God. If he sins he was repenting. He knew that he was not above God. He also accepted the advice and the guidance of prophets Nathan and Gad.

Strengths of King David

- He expanded the kingdom of Israel. This was achieved through the conquering of other nations such as, the Philistines, the Ammonites,, Moabites The Edomites, and the Syrians.
- He improved the economy of Israel. This was achieved through the tax which he imposed on all defeated nations.
- He captured Jerusalem and made it to be the capital of Israel. Jerusalem was captured from the Jebusites. Just because David took it from the Jebusites it was called the city of David.
- He made Jerusalem the centre of political and religious issues. This was achieved when the Ark was brought into the city (II Sam. 6: 1-15).

NB: David wanted to build a house for God (temple). This was his plan since the Ark was still kept in the tent while himself was staying in the house. At first Prophet Nathan accepted the idea but later God told Nathan that David should not build the temple since his hands have shed much blood. Instead his son will build the temple.

Weaknesses of David

1. He committed adultery with Bathsheba the wife of Uriah, his soldier (**II Sam. 11: 1-5**).
2. He arranged the death of Uriah (**II Sam. 11: 6-28**)
3. He failed to discipline his sons:
 - His son Amnon committed incest with Tamar, and later Amnon was killed by Absalom, the brother of Tamar.
 - Absalom formed a rebellion against his father, David in attempt to overthrow David.
4. He ignored the advice of Nathan and took a census which resulted in a plague (**I Chronicle 21: 1-15**).

Everlasting house of King David (II Sam. 7: 1-17)

God promised David that:

5. He would make his name great and that his name will be remembered for ever.
6. The house of David and his kingdom would be established for ever. This means, his descendants will continue ruling as kings in Israel.

Leadership qualities of King David.

David had the following qualities that made him to be a unique and an outstanding leader.

- Had faith in God. This is seen in the way he challenged Goliath (I Sam. 17: 41-47)
- He was a brave warrior. This is seen in the way he killed a hero of the philistines, Goliath.
- He had a forgiving heart. David did not revenge against King Saul who wanted David dead. Though David had three chances of killing Saul, but he did not kill Saul.
- He was royal and humble to God and to his people. David though he knew that he will be the next king he did not boast that he is the next king, but he continued to respect King Saul.
- He was repenting whenever he has committed a sin.
- He was a wise statesman. This is seen in the way he united all the twelve tribe of Israel. At first the ten tribe from the north did not accept David a king but David did not attack them. He patiently waited for them to realize their mistake. And after seven years, the ten tribe voluntarily came and asked David to be their king.

The death of King David and the reign of King Solomon.

David died at a ripe old age after ruling Israel for 40 years. (I Chronicles 29: 26-30)/ (I Kings 1:1-4). Before he died he chose Solomon, his son to be the king. He advised him on how to lead his people (I Kings 2: 1-12). David told Solomon to be strong, to walk in the path of the Lord and to keep the commandments of the Lord.

SOLOMON THE SON OF DAVID REIGNS AS A KING

Solomon became the wisest king in the world (I Kings 10: 23-25). Apart from **wisdom** God also gave Solomon, **wealth** (riches), **honour**, and **long life**. (I Kings 3: 1-28). The Wisdom of Solomon was noted after judging the case of two prostitutes. This made other rulers to come to test Solomon with hard questions. For example, Queen of Sheba. During the reign of King Solomon, Israel became very rich.

Strengths of King Solomon.

Solomon was successful in the following ways:

- ✓ He was at diplomacy. Solomon tried to maintain peaceful relations with other nations. He did this by marrying foreign wives (princesses). This made Israel to be linked with other nations through marriage alliances.
- ✓ Defense and secrecy was good. Solomon built a strong professional army to protect the land of Israel. The army had horses and chariots.
- ✓ Good at building projects. The famous building that Solomon built was the temple, which was known as the Temple of Solomon or the Temple of Jerusalem. The Ark was brought into the temple. (C.F I Kings 10: 14-26)
- ✓ He was a good musician. Solomon was a talented musician. He composed three thousand proverbs and over a thousand songs.
- ✓ Good at civil service. Solomon had well organized civil service and administrative system.

Weaknesses of Solomon

- He married many foreign wives. This made him worship foreign gods to please them. He also built pagan altars for these idols. Solomon worshipped the Sidonian goddess *Ashtoreth*, the Moabite god *Chemosh*, and the Ammonite god *Milcom*. By doing this Solomon, broke the first commandments of having and serving one God. (I Kings 11: 1-10).

- He broke the sixth commandments when he killed his half brother Adonijah for fear that Adonijah would take his throne as a king. (I Kings 2: 13-25)
- He started forced labour in order to accomplish his building projects. He also forced non-Israelites to work on his projects without pay. Solomon became an oppressor of the people. (I Kings 9: 15-23)
- Solomon heavily taxed his people in order to run the country, the navy, the army, building projects. The poor suffered from this taxation.
- It appears that Solomon loved himself more than God. This is seen when he spent thirteen years in building his palace, while the temple was built within seven years. This means he spent much money/resources on himself than on the Temple.(I Kings 7: 1-12).

DIVISION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF ISRAEL INTO NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN KINGDOMS

Solomon died in 931 BC after ruling a united kingdom of Israel for 40 years and he was to be succeeded by his son **Rehoboam**. However, by the time Solomon was dying, the people were tired of the taxes and forced labour. So they hoped that the next king, Rehoboam will be different. But Rehoboam was not prepared to remove (to lift) the oppression and the burden of his father, Solomon had laid on the people. Instead, Rehoboam threatened to make the life of the people harder than his father Solomon. (I Kings 12-16). The result was that the ten tribes from the north rejected him as a king. He was left only with two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. The ten tribes chose Jeroboam as their king.

The Ten tribes in the north became to be known as the **Northern Kingdom or Israel**, while the two tribes in the south were called **southern Kingdom or Judah**.

NB: After Solomon died, he was succeeded by **Rehoboam**, who proved to be unfit for the task of reigning. Prior to Solomon's death, Jeroboam the Ephraimite, a young overseer of the forced labour battalions of the "house of Joseph" in the north, had encountered **Ahijah**, a prophet from the old shrine of the confederacy at Shiloh, and Ahijah had torn a new garment into 12 pieces, prophesying that 10 pieces (tribes) would be given to Jeroboam and only two pieces (tribal political units) would be retained by the house of David. The dismemberment of the united monarchy was to be brought about by Yahweh because Solomon had "*not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, as David his father did.*"

Rehoboam, having been crowned king of the united monarchy in Jerusalem, went north to Shechem, a shrine centre of the 10 northern tribes of the old confederacy, to have his position ratified by the northern units of the kingdom. Using this gathering as an opportune time to present their grievances against Solomon's oppressive domestic policies, the northerners, under the leadership of the returned political fugitive Jeroboam, asked the king from Jerusalem to lighten their load. Requesting three days to take their grievances under advisement, Rehoboam sought counsel from his advisers. The older counsellors advised moderation, the younger, retaliation. Assenting to the latter, Rehoboam returned to the people with an answer that was to lead to the disintegration of the united monarchy that had lasted for only about a century under three kings: "*My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.*" The response of the northerners was the ancient battle cry, "*To your tents, O Israel.*" Rehoboam, ruling from the cities, sent Adoram, the leader of the forced labour battalions, to Israel (the name to be used henceforth for the northern area); but he was stoned to death.

The uncrowned king of the north, unable to quell the rebellion, returned to Jerusalem in rapid flight. Heeding the advice of the prophet Shemaiah, Rehoboam allowed the situation to remain that of a

stalemate, thus inaugurating the period of the divided monarchy that lasted in Israel in the north from 922–721 BCE and in Judah in the south until 586 BCE.

Northern Kingdom (Israel)

This kingdom had the following tribes: ***Asher, Dan, Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Manasseh, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun***. This kingdom lasted for about 200 years and had 19 different kings. All the kings followed the bad example of Jeroboam (Jeroboam I) who practiced idolatry.

The dynasties of the northern kingdom were short lived. **Jeroboam** was succeeded by his son **Nadab**, who reigned for two years before he was overthrown by **Baasha**, who reigned for 24 years. Baasha's son, **Elah**, ruled only two years before he was assassinated while in a drunken state by **Zimri**, a chariot commander, who exterminated all of the members of the house of Baasha. Reigning for the brief period of seven days, Zimri was besieged in the citadel at Tirzah by **Omri**, commander of the army. Zimri was burned to death in the king's house.

With the dynasty of Omri (c. 876–842), the prophetic movement begins to assume a position of tremendous importance in Israel and Judah. Omri (reigned c. 876–869). To strengthen an alliance with the Phoenicians, Omri contracted a marriage between **Jezebel**, princess of Sidon, and his son **Ahab**. The marriage proved to be fateful for Israel and was a catalyst that brought the prophetic movement into a course of action. The reign of Ahab coincided with the activities of the prophet **Elijah**.

NB: King **Omri** had built Samaria, and, thanks to an alliance with the Phoenicians, he and **Ahab** had brought the northern kingdom to the peak of its economic, political, and military strength. These advances came, however, at a price of religious syncretism and socioeconomic polarization the prophets considered fatal for the community's religious and human future.

The first king of Northern Kingdom was **Jeroboam I** and the last king was **Hoshea**. The capital city of the Northern Kingdom was **Samaria**. Some of the important kings of northern kingdom were as follows:

1. **Jeroboam I** – he is the first king of the new state of Israel. He made his capital first at Shechem, then at Tirzah. Recognizing the need for religious independence from Jerusalem, he set up official sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel, at the two ends of his realm, installing in them golden calves (or bulls). This means, he led the Israelites into idolatry, the practice that other kings copied.
2. **Omri**. –he was sixth king. One of its greatest kings, who founded a dynasty that lasted through the reign of his two grandsons (to 842). Under Omri an impressive building program was initiated. He built Samaria as the capital city of Northern Kingdom. During his time, amicable relations were established with Judah. The Phoenician kingdom of Tyre was made an ally through the marriage of his son **Ahab** to the Tyrian princess Jezebel. Jezebel was the daughter of the king of Phoenicia (Sidon), Eth-baal.
3. **Ahab**-he was the seventh king and the son of Omri. He married Jezebel of Sidon. Jezebel influenced Ahab to worship Baal and Asherah. Baal was believed that he controlled rainfall, hence, he was worshipped as a god of storms and fertility. This kind of religion was called fertility cult. Most Israelites started to worship this god. This was the time when **Elijah** the Prophet appeared in protesting Baal worship.
4. **Jeroboam II**- he was the last powerful king of Israel. During his reign, Israel became rich. This was the time when Amos the prophet appeared, in protesting selfishness and the greedy of the rich at the expense of the poor.
5. **Hoshea**- the last king of Israel. During his reign. Northern Kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians. The people were taken to exile in Assyria. That was around 722 BC.

SOUTHERN KINGDOM (JUDAH)

This kingdom had only two tribes, **Judah** and **Benjamin**. With time, the tribe of Benjamin was absorbed into the tribe of Judah. The kingdom lasted for about 400 years and had 20 different kings. All of them were the descendants of David. The first king was **Rehoboam** (the son of Solomon) and the last king was **Zedekiah**. Some of the important kings of Judah are as follows:

1. **Hezekiah**- reigned (c. 715–c. 686), who instituted a religious reform to return worship to a pure Yahwist form, also displayed political independence, joining a coalition of Palestinian states against Assyria.
2. **Josiah**-he reigned from 640–609 BC during a period when the Assyrian Empire was in decline and was precipitated by the discovery of the Book of the Law during the restoration of the Temple. In accordance with its admonitions, the pagan altars and idols in the Temple were removed, rural sanctuaries ("high places") all the way into Samaria were destroyed, and the Jerusalem Temple was made the sole official place of worship.

WHO WERE THE PROPHETS?

The name 'prophet' comes from the Hebrew word, 'nabi', which means '*one who is called*' or 'one who calls out'. Prophets were also called 'seers' because they could see the future (through visual experience) or he could hear something from the Lord (auditory experience). Therefore a seer had the ability to see or know what others could not.

In this sense, then, a **Prophets/ Prophetesses**: are men or women *Called or appointed by God to speak on His behalf, to foretell the future and to interpret the will of God to people.*

WHAT IS A PROPHECY OR AN ORACLE? This is a prediction or a forecast made by a prophet about the future. In other words, is a proclamation made by a prophet on behalf of God, often and usually introduced by a phrase; '*The Lord says*' or '*The Lord Spoke to me.*'

What is a prophetic vision? - Something the prophet sees or hears his mind or in a dream. This is the way in which God conveys a message to a prophet.

DUTIES /ROLES/WORKS OF THE TRUE PROPHETS IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

- They speak against personal sins, social evils, oppression and social injustice in a society. (**Amos 4: 1-3; Isaiah 1: 16-17**).
- To announce punishment and judgment due to the sins of the people.
- To provide encouragement and hope during the time of trouble, failures and punishment. The aim is to instill hope that God is still with them.
- To announce that God is Holy and just. The Holiness of God cannot be tainted by people's sins, but that he is ready to welcome people who have repented.
- They exhort leaders and people to be faithful to the covenant by putting their trust in God alone and obeying His commands.
- They were there to handle cultic life. This means they were living in the sanctuaries as priests. For example Prophet Samuel was both a priest and a prophet.
- They observe the Social, political or religious situation and say what God thinks about them. In other words prophets were also connected with politics and had a say in the running of the government. For example:

- Prophet Ahijah instigated rebellion against Jeroboam when he gave 10 pieces of cloth to Jeroboam and two pieces to Rehoboam to indicate that the former will rule 10 tribes and the later two tribes.
- Rehoboam was stopped by the prophet Shemaiah not to attack the Northern tribes (I Kings 12: 21-24).
- Nathan prophesied that the house of David will rule for ever. His prophecy had a long term effect on Israel's political and religious outlook.

NB: Later on, some politicians/leaders tried to put prophets under political gain. This made prophets proclaim what the king wanted rather than the truth. When this happens a prophet becomes a false prophet.

In general, prophets were like the shepherds, guardians and watchmen of morality. Failures to heed their advice lead to doom/destruction.

OTHER DESIGNATIONS HELP TO DEFINE THE ROLE OF A PROPHET.

1. Early in Israel's history they were called "**seers**" – (1 Sam 9:9)
2. Another appellation was "**man of God**" – (1 Sam 9:6; 1 Kin 17:18)
3. Also known as a "**servant of God**" – (1 Kings 18:36; 1 Chron. 6:49)
4. They served as God's "**messenger**" – (Isai 42:19)
5. They were also assigned the role of "**watchman**" – (Ezek 3:17; 33:7)

Types of prophecies?

- A) **Woe prophecy** - denounces evil and announces punishment.
- B) **Weal Prophecy** - announces blessings, peace, prosperity, freedom etc

Religious leaders that have taken the role of the ancient prophets

-Reverends/bishops/pastors/evangelists/apostles/preachers

PROPHETS IN NORTHERN KINGDOM (ISRAEL)

ELIJAH AND THE DROUGHT (I Kings 17: 1-7)/(18: 1-18)

Elijah's name means "*Yahweh is my God*". The reign of King Ahab coincided with the activities of the prophet Elijah. Ahab, under the influence of his queen **Jezebel**, allowed her to foster the worship of the fertility god Baal in Samaria and in all Israel. A temple was built for Baal in Samaria.

Jezebel was the daughter of the priest-king Ethbaal, ruler of the coastal Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon (modern Ṣaydā, Lebanon). When Jezebel married Ahab she persuaded him to introduce the worship of the Tyrian god Baal-Melkart, a nature god. Jezebel tried to destroy those who opposed her; most of the prophets of Yahweh were killed at her command.

During these apostate activities the great prophet Elijah the Tishbite appeared. A man of erratic behaviour, *wearing a garment of hair* with a leather *belt around his waist*, using uncouth language, and *preferring the wilderness areas to the towns*.

He announced that there would be no rain or dew for three years. Then he took refuge in the desert in the east of Jordan near the wadi (brook of Cherith) to see if Ahab would repent. Jezebel in anger started killing prophets of God. Those who survived escaped into the caves and were kept alive by Obadiah, who worked for Ahab. Ahab continued to worship Yahweh. Obadiah secretly sent food to these prophets. In these three years, Elijah performed two miracles:

1. He ensured a widow of Zarephath and her son of continuous food for her act of generosity to him: Her bow of flour never ran out and her jar of oil never ran out (her food of supply never finished).

2. He cured her son, apparently dead, who had stopped breathing, by praying and then, stretching himself on top of the boy three times. (I Kings 17: 17-24).

After three years of drought, Elijah then went to the court of Ahab at Samaria, after having met one of the court officials ***Obadiah***, who had escaped Jezebel's attempt to destroy the leaders of the cult of Yahweh, and stood before Ahab, accusing the king of being the "*troubler of Israel*" for having followed the cult of Baal. Elijah hurled a challenge to the Baalists, supported by Jezebel, to meet him in a contest on Mt. Carmel.

The contest at Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18: 19-40)

Elijah assembled the people of Israel on Mount Carmel, where he demonstrated the supremacy of God over Baal. The contest between Elijah and the **450** prophets of Baal was dramatic. Elijah first taunted the spectators, "*How much longer will it take you to make up your minds? If the Lord is God, worship him; but if Baal is God, worship him!*"

Elijah then laid the ground rules: **two bulls were to be sacrificed**, one each on an altar, on which firewood was to be laid, but no one was to light the fire—only the God "**who answers by fire**." The prophets of Baal had the first opportunity, and they prayed to Baal loudly for a full half day, until noon. During this time, Elijah, in coarse language, taunted them. Elijah mocked the Baalists by saying that Baal might not be responding because he was out *urinating* ("gone aside"), *on a trip*, or *sleeping*. The Baalists then attempted to use sympathetic magic. **By cutting themselves** they hoped that as their life blood flowed on the ground Baal would send rain, the life blood of the Earth. The turn of Elijah came. He made an altar using 12 stones, he dug a trench round the altar, large enough to hold many liters of water. He ordered the people to pour water on the sacrifice and on the wood, and then he prayed to God. God answered him by fire that consumed the water and the sacrifice. The Israelites threw themselves on the ground and worshipped God, "*Yahweh is God, Yahweh is God.*"

Then Elijah had the prophets of Baal put to death near **River Kishon**, whereupon the rains came that marked the end of the drought. He announced to Ahab pointing out that Yahweh, rather than Baal, is the Lord of nature.



The flight of Elijah to Mt. Sinai (I Kings 19: 1-18)

When Jezebel heard of the slaughter of her prophets, she angrily swore to have Elijah killed, forcing him to flee for his life. Elijah footed to Mt. Sinai for 40 days. There he complained to God that people have

torn down the altars of God and are about to kill him. God answered him in a soft whispering voice. The message of God was that:

- He should anoint **Hazael as king of Syria**. Hazael became king after the death of [Ben-hadad I](#), under whom he was a court official. He killed Ahab in a war.
- He should anoint **Jehu as king of Israel**-Jehu was originally a soldier of Ahab and rose to the rank of general, then, later, he became a king in Israel. He did this after exhorted by Elisha to slew *Jehoram*, (king of Israel), *Ahaziah*, (king of Judah,) and *Jezebel*,
- He should anoint **Elisha** as his successor.

The vineyard of Naboth (I Kings 21: 1-24)

Naboth was killed by Ahab because he refused to sell his vineyard to Ahab. Naboth refused because his vineyard was *an inherited treasure from his ancestors*. Naboth was falsely accused and was stoned to death outside the city. The punishment of this social injustice was:

1. God would bring disaster upon Ahab and his family: the relatives of Ahab would be eaten by dogs and vultures.
2. Jezebel would die and dogs would eat her body.

Reasons why Elijah faced danger and hostility

- I. Because he was confronting the king and the people against Baalism.
- II. He challenged the people corruption
- III. He was reminding the people to change from the corrupt ways and start living as God's people.

Relevance of the message of Elijah to Christians today:

1. Christians should stand for the truth always despite the danger in our front.
2. Christians have the duty to fight and uproot corruption.
3. Christians should be ready to oppose the government if it is injustice.
4. Christians should not shut their eyes to the evils but try to end them.
5. Christians should be ready to accomplish dangerous tasks.
6. Christians should be ready to be alone against the many.
7. Christians should be ready to listen to the voice of God and pray when in problems.

The calling of Elisha as a prophet (I Kings 19: 19-21)

The name Elisha means “*God is deliverance*” in Hebrew. Elisha was a farmer until chosen by Elijah to be his disciple. Elisha was ploughing with a team of oxen. Elijah came, took his mantle and throw it over Elisha. Elisha understood this to mean that he should follow Elijah. Elisha left his oxen and ran after Elijah. Elisha asked Elijah to let him bid farewell to his parents. Elisha then, killed his team of oxen, cooked the meat and used the yoke as fuel. He gave the meat to the people and became the helper of Elijah.

Elisha was a political activist and revolutionary. He led a “holy war” that extinguished the house of Omri in Jerusalem as well as in Samaria (2 Kings 9–10). Elisha was a passionate exponent of the ancient religious and cultural traditions of Israel, which both felt to be threatened by the ruling dynasty of Omri, which was in alliance with Phoenicia (Jezebel the wife of King Ahab's wife, tried to introduce the worship of Baal into Israel).

Duties of Elisha as a successor of Elijah.

- i. Ministering Elijah.
- ii. Helping Hazael (King of Aram) and Jehu (King of Israel) to defeat the enemies of God.
- iii. Proclaiming the word of God to the faithful remnants.

The going up of Elijah to heaven in a whirlwind (II Kings 2: 1-12)

Elijah did not die, but was taken up into heaven by the Lord in a chariot of fire pulled by the horses in fire. This chariot of fire appeared as a whirlwind. Elisha asked Elijah to give him a '*double portion*' of the spirit of Elijah to help him succeed in his ministry. **Elisha** was left to carry on the ministry of Elijah. The name Elisha in Hebrew, means, '*God is deliverance*'

During the reigns of King **Jehoram** (Joram) of Israel (c. 849–842), Elisha began his prophetic career. Elisha was unlike his mentor Elijah in many ways:

- i. He wore more fashionable clothing
- ii. He used music to bring about the prophetic spirit—much as Saul had done earlier.
- iii. A cycle of miracle stories arose around Elisha;
 - He made bitter water sweet.
 - He revived the son of a Shunammite woman from death by breathing into his mouth and lying on top of him.
 - He helped a woman to avoid giving up her two sons to a creditor who would make them slaves.
 - He informed the Syrian captain **Naaman** how to be cured from his skin disease.
- IV. In addition to being a miracle worker, Elisha was a *political power*. He prophesied the defeat of the Moabites as a result of a huge rainfall and advised **Joram**⁵ how to defeat *Ben-hadad*, king of Syria. By performing this last act Elisha instigated a revolt in Syria; Hazael murdered the sick and dying Ben-hadad.

The cure of Naaman by Elisha (II Kings 5: 1-19)

Naaman a Syrian commander suffered from leprosy (a dreaded skin disease). His servant girl from Israel told him to meet Elisha who could heal him. In Israel, he was told to wash himself seven times in the Jordan River. Naaman resisted this. Why? Because:

- He was thinking that he deserved to be healed through another process, not bathing as Elisha had said.
- Jordan River was not good as Rivers of Syria such as Pharpar and Abana.

⁵ Joram/Jehoram, the son of Ahab and Jezebel. Ruled from 849– 842 BC in of Israel. He maintained a close relations with Judah. Together with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, Jehoram unsuccessfully attempted to subdue a revolt of Moab against Israel. As had his father, Jehoram later endeavoured to recover Ramoth-gilead from Hazael, king of Damascus. In this matter he was aided by his nephew Ahaziah, then king of Judah. Wounded during the fighting at Ramoth-gilead, Jehoram retired to Jezreel in Judah. During his convalescence a revolution took place and Jehu was anointed king at Ramoth-gilead. Jehu then put to death all the members of Ahab's family including Jehoram, Jezebel, and Ahaziah.

His servants persuaded him to do as Elisha has told him. Naaman got cured after bathing in Jordan River seven times. Naaman took the soil from Israel to Syria as a sign that he will be worshipping Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Prophet Amos – ‘The Country Prophet’ (3:1-6:14)

Amos means "burden-bearer". His home village was Tekoa village, 12 miles south of Jerusalem. This means Amos came from the southern kingdom, but did his ministry in the Northern Kingdom. Hence, he prophesied against Israel in the north. Before becoming a prophet, his occupation was "a sheep breeder and a tender of sycamore fruit." (**Amos 7:14**). In this sense, Amos, was an outdoorsman, accustomed to the wilds of nature, and of hard, honest toil again, It would be easy for him to have little sympathy for the lazy and materialistic conduct of his northern kinsman.

THE DATE

Amos prophesied in the days when Uzziah, was the king of Judah and when **Jeroboam II**⁶ was the king of Israel. His audience is primarily **the northern kingdom of Israel**.

Situation of Northern Kingdom during the time of Amos.

During this time, Northern Kingdom was a rich kingdom under **King Jeroboam II**. The city was growing due to urbanization (this is the process where people move from village to town looking for jobs or to do business). This created social division between the rich and the poor. The rich were getting richer and richer and the poor were getting poorer. There were a lot of injustices in courts. Corruption was the order of the day, the rich enjoyed great luxury at the expense of the poor. People pretended to be worshippers of God but their worship was empty because they lacked justice. In addition, the Israelites were worshipping idols at Dan and at Bethel which were set up by Jeroboam I. The people of God were behaving in a manner contrary to the covenant way of life which promoted brotherhood, justice and compassion. There was little evidence of love for God and neighbor as required by the Law (Dt. 6: 4-5). In summary many people were morally, religiously, and politically corrupt.

The Book of Amos divided into three sections, in which we find.

- 1) "**Oracles**" concerning sin and judgment of *eight nations (Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Judah and Israel.* (ch.1-2)
- 2) "**Sermons**" concerning the sin and judgment of Israel (ch. 3-6)
- 3) "**Visions**" regarding the sin and judgment of Israel (ch. 7-9)

NB: The emphasis placed upon the **sins and judgment of the Northern kingdom of Israel**.

Oracles of Amos against the Israelites

- A general rejection of the Law.
- Exploitation and oppression of the poor and the defenseless (**Amos 2:7**)
- Lust for economic power leading to dishonesty in trade. I.e. false scales were common (**Amos 8: 6**)

⁶ Jeroboam II, king of Israel (reigned 786-746 BC), son of King Joash of Israel. During his reign, Jeroboam recovered the lost provinces of Ammon and Moab from Damascus. His reign, recorded in 2 Kings 13-15, was outwardly successful and prosperous, but he was denounced by the prophets Amos and Hosea for contributing to the ultimate doom of Israel by his toleration of injustice and idolatry. Jeroboam, considered the last of the powerful kings of Israel, was succeeded at his death by his son Zechariah, who was assassinated within a year.

- Selfish luxury of the rich leading to indifference towards the suffering and the general welfare of the nation (**Amos 6: 4-6**). In other words, there was wasting of money in luxuries at the expense of the poor.
- Covering up impurity of the heart with offerings and sacrifices (hypocritical religion)-**Amos 5: 21-24**. People believed that their sins would go after offering sacrifices. Amos felt that although, the sacrifices were offered with enthusiasm at sanctuaries (Amos 5:21-23), they were undermining religion because sacrifices only encouraged outward observance of the law, while ignoring the evil inner attitude.
- Corrupt law courts/bribery and corruption by judges (**Amos 5: 12-13**)
- Sexual immorality.(**Amos 2 : 7b**).

The election of Israel (Amos 2:9-11; 3: 1-2)

God took care of the Israelites and destroyed their enemies such as the Amorites and God expected them to do good. However, the Israelites were rebellious. This rebellious made their sins worse than other nations. The Israelites thought that because they were the chosen race of God, they cannot be punished. The punishment that God would execute would be the result of Israel's failure to fulfill its parts as the elect of God.

REGARDING THE DAY OF THE LORD.

The Israelites believed that '**the Day of the Lord**' would be a day when God would judge all their enemies and they themselves would be exalted. In other words, to them it was a day of glory and victory. But Amos shocked them by telling them that the: The "**day of the Lord**" is a day of *judgment* and *a day of darkness* - **Am 5:18;8:7-10** To Amos the day of the Lord has reference to God's judgment upon Israel, which came when Assyria took them into captivity. Therefore, the day of the Lord can refer to:

- a) Present judgment of God on his people (Israel) or foreign nations. **2 Pe 3:7,10-12**
- b) Judgment of God on all evil at the end of the age (world)/ Final Judgment. This includes severe tribulations and the return of Christ who will come to judge the world –**Mark 13: 17: 27; Acts 17:30-31**.

Punishment of the Israelites: THE "VISIONS" OF AMOS (7:1-9:15)

Amos saw a number of **warning visions** that signify the punishment of the Israelites. One of them include:

A. THE VISION OF THE SUMMER FRUIT (8:1-14)

Amos is shown a basket of summer fruit (evidently quite ripened). The Lord reveals that Israel's end is near, and is ripe for judgment. Once again, *the nature of Israel's sin is described (Am 8:4-6)*:

- a. Oppression of the poor and needy - cf. **Am 2:6-7**
- b. Disdain for religious observances, because they hinder economic enterprise.
- c. Dishonest economic practices, to further abuse the poor and needy.

The nature of Israel's judgment is described - **Am 8:7-14**

- a. A day of mourning is coming - **Am 8:7-10**
- b. A day of famine for the word of God is coming - **Am 8:11-12**
- c. Those who trust in idolatry will fall and never rise again **Am 8:13-14**

AN INTERLUDE: AMAZIAH'S COMPLAINT AGAINST AMOS (7:10-17)

Amaziah, priest of Bethel (center of idolatrous worship), accuses Amos of conspiracy against Jeroboam II, king of Israel i.e. that Israel will go to exile and that Jeroboam II will die in a battle. Amaziah tells Amos to leave Bethel and go back to his own country of Judah. Amos defends his prophetic mission. Amos then prophesies against Amaziah and Israel - **Am 7:16-17**. He said to Amaziah:

- His wife will become a prostitute.
- His children will be killed in a war.

- He will die in a pagan country.

THE REMNANTS AND RESTORATION (Amos 9: 8-15)

Though Amos preached about the destruction of Israel, he also gave hope that not all will be destroyed. There will be some survivors who are called the remnants. Therefore, the remnants are the survivors who will be left alive during the destruction of the city. These remnants will restore or bring back Messianic hope, thus, when David's line will be placed on the throne and the re-gathered Israel will dwell in the land, there is a glimpse of a brighter future.

Unfortunately, not many heeded the warnings of Amos - cf. **2 Kings 17: 13-23**

- a. Within thirty years (722 B.C.), Israel was taken into captivity
- b. Under the cruel hand of the Assyrians, they experienced the righteous judgment of God

Relevance of the message of Amos to Christians today.

- Christians are called to condemn unrighteousness, exploitation of the poor.
- Religious hypocrisy will lead to doom.
- Christians have to maintain moral standard all the time not
- Wealth have to be used to glorify God and promote the general welfare of the society.
- Lust for money can lead to exploitation of the poor.
- Bribes and Corruption lead to the suffering of the weak and innocent especially when justice has been exchanged with money.

SUMMARY OF AMOS

The book of Amos is attributed to the prophet Amos, a herdsman. It is one of 12 books known as the Minor Prophets. God demanded and expected more from the Jews because of their covenant with him. They were not entitled to God's special favor; rather, they bore responsibility for showing exemplary obedience to his law. Amos was especially concerned with the oppression of the poor by the rich and with immoral religious practices. He stressed the personal responsibility of each individual before God and prophesied that Israel would be destroyed if the people did not turn from their corrupt ways.

In addition, Amos condemned the observance of ritual unaccompanied by true righteousness in all human and divine interrelations, and he prophesied a "day of the Lord" when the Jews would be called upon to account for their sins before God. In the last few verses (9:9-15), Amos foresaw the eventual redemption, peace, and prosperity of the people of Israel.

END OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM AND ITS DESRUCTION BY THE ASSYRIAN KING, SARGON II

After the death of Jeroboam II, the Northern Kingdom declined, since the remaining six kings who came after him were weak (Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah and Hoshea). At last, the kingdom was destroyed by **King Sargon II**⁷ of Assyria in 722/21 BC. Many people were deported to Assyria as exiles. The Northern Kingdom was occupied by foreigners. The off springs of the remaining Jews and these foreigners were called Samaritans.

Main causes of the destruction of Northern Kingdom

- It did not listen to the prophets of God.
- It worshipped idols.
- It followed customs of other nations.

⁷Sargon II was a younger son of **Tiglath-pileser III** and a brother of his predecessor **Shalmaneser V**, who may have died ignominiously or may have been deposed.

- Hoshea, the last king, refused to pay tribute to Assyrian king, **Shalmanaser V.**

Summary of the destruction of Israel

Jeroboam II was the last powerful king of Israel. After him the power and position of Israel rapidly decreased and for 20 years after his death, Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians just like Amos and Hosea had foretold. There were three stages in the destruction of Israel.

1. In the days of **Menahem**, **Pul** (*Tiglath Pileser*), marched up against Israel, but withdrew after Menahem paid a heavy tribute. (II Kings 15: 17-22).
2. In the days of **Pekah**, Pul attacked Israel again. The northern part of Israel (areas around and near the Sea of Galilee) was invaded and people around there went to exile to Assyria. This was known as the Galilee captivity. (II Kings 15: 27-31)
3. In the days of **Hoshea** (the last king of Israel), **Shalmanaser**, who succeeded Pul attacked Israel because Hoshea stopped paying tribute. Samaria was besieged for three years. During those three years, Shalmanaser died and was succeeded by Sargon II who finally destroyed Israel and took the people as slaves. That was in 721 BC. (II Kings 17: 1-6)

With the Assyrian conquest, the story of the northern kingdom came to an end. Some of the poor farmers were left in the land, but all the leading people were gone and the tribal structure of the most of the ten tribes was dissolved. Only Zebulun and Naphtali which were conquered earlier by the Assyrian remained in their homeland, the rural province of Galilee. To make sure that Israel would never be a problem again, the Assyrians brought people from far away corners of their empire to resettle the empty cities of central Israel. The new settlers brought their own gods. The new settlers gradually intermarried with the remainder of the Israelite population that had been left behind by the Assyrians. The combined population worshipped God but also continued to worship foreign gods. Because they had settled in the towns around Samaria, they were called Samaria.

Prophets in southern kingdom (Judah)

Judah lasted longer than the Northern Kingdom because some of the kings feared God and they tried to bring the people back to God. Judah lasted for about 400 years and had 20 different kings. The first king was Rehoboam and the last king was Zedekiah. It was under Zedekiah that Judah was destroyed by the Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. That was around 587 BC. Many Jews were taken to Babylon as exiles. Their exiles lasted for about 70 years (II Kings 25:1-21). The prophet who witnessed the destruction of Judah was Jeremiah. While the Jews were in exile, a number of prophets appeared. Some of them included prophet Ezekiel.

The exilic prophet: Ezekiel the prophet

Ezekiel was a son of Buzi. He was both a priest and a prophet. He was taken to exile during the first deportation on March 16, 597 BC just before the final destruction of 586 BC. (10-11 years before the final destruction). First deportation was the time when noble people of Judah were taken to Babylon together with their king, **Jehoiakim**.

In Babylon, Ezekiel was living in a community of Tel-Abib, near River Chebar, where he was called to be a prophet (Ezra 2: 1-15). That was the seventh year when the Jews were becoming established in Babylon. Soon after becoming a prophet, Ezekiel received a number of visions, parables and he also did many symbolic acts to show that though the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed, there will be hope that the people of Judah will be released and would soon retain to their homeland, Judah.

Before the final destruction of Judah, Ezekiel was eating unpleasant food to indicate what the Jews would be eating in exile. Again, he did a **symbolic act** of cutting his hair into three parts:

1. For burning
2. For further cutting
3. For scattering in the wind

This symbolic act symbolized the complete destruction of Jerusalem which would soon come. Ezekiel also narrated the **parable of the boiling pot** to indicate the coming destruction of Judah by the Babylonian army. (Ezek. 24: 3-12)

The vision of the valley of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37: 1-14)

Ezekiel had a vision at the valley of Tel-Abib, where he saw very dry bones. The prophet was told to summon the spirit to enter the bones. The bones became skeletons and turned into bodies, but lacked life. The prophet again was called to summon the four winds to enter the dead bodies. The bodies stood up and formed a large army.

Meaning of the vision

1. The dry bones represented the total destruction of people of Judah and Israel, whose hope had died when they were scattered among the foreigners. This is similar to the dry bones since, they lacked hope of having life.
2. Larger army symbolized that God would restore Judah and Israel and bring them back to normal life.
NB: The bones were raised to life in two stages:
 - a) Political restoration to the land.
 - b) Spiritual restoration to faith.

NB: The **vision of the valley of the dry bones** illustrates yet another significant theme: that of the spirit of God as an animating force creating life in the midst of death.

In summary, the duty of Ezekiel as a prophet was to:

- Explain the reasons for the captivity (Ezek. 18:1-13).
- To foretell the fall of Jerusalem
- To bring the exiled Jews back to God
- To give hope to the people that they will be restored to their homeland.

End of the exile and the return of Jews back to Judah

Nebuchadnezzar was one of the great conquerors in history. After his death, his successors were not strong as him. Finally at the battle called Tigris in 539 Babylon fell to King Cyrus of Persia. King Cyrus declared an edict/decree that allowed all defeated people to go back to their homeland and keep their own customs and worship. King Cyrus was a liberator to most defeated people. The exile was over for anyone who wanted to return. The Jews returned in two phases/groups:

1. The first group to return was led by *Sheshbazzar* and
2. The second group was led by *Zerubbabel*.

Some Jews were not willing to go back to Judah for various reasons. Some of the reasons are S follows:

- a) The journey was long
- b) They feared the work of building the temple
- c) Many Jews found comfort in Babylon and were not ready to leave this comfortable life.
- d) The future of Judah was not certain.

When the Jews returned a number of prophets appeared that encouraged them to rebuild the temple and the Jerusalem wall at the same time purifying their religion. Some of the prophets that came after exile included, **Haggai** the prophet. These prophets that came after exile were called post-exilic prophets.

the post-exilic prophet :Haggai the prophet

When the second group came under Zerubbabel, the work of building the temple and the Jerusalem walls began. The work however, stopped for 15 years due to hostility of the Samaritans. (Ezra 4: 1-5, 6: 24). What had begun in 536 B.C. was finally finished in 516 B.C. It was at this point that Haggai rose up to speak. In summary, Haggai had four messages to the returning Jews who were in Judah:

1. The call to build the temple. Haggai condemned the people for preferring material things at the expense for the spiritual part. This was said because the people were living in good houses while the temple was still in ruins (Haggai 1:1-6). With this urge and condemnation, Zerubbabel, Joshua, the high priest, and the remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord and began rebuilding the temple (Haggai 1: 12-15).
2. He encouraged the people who were building the temple that the temple will be of great splendor than the temple that was destroyed (Haggai 2:9).
3. He reminded the Jews that impure hearts bring God's judgment, and he promised them that obedience and pure hearts would bring divine blessings (Haggai 2: 10-19).
4. He also promised the coming of the messiah (Haggai 2: 20-23).

SUMMARY OF HAGGAI

The book consists of four prophecies delivered over a four-month period in the second year of the reign of the Persian king *Darius I the Great* (521 BC). It was a year of blight, drought, and general dissatisfaction for the exiles who had recently returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. The prophet attributes these misfortunes to the failure of the people to finish rebuilding the Temple. Haggai's oracles show his concern for the immediate reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. He believed that the economic distress of the people was caused by their negligent delay in starting the construction. Haggai declares that God is punishing them for decorating their own houses before completing the house of the Lord, and he urges Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest, to rally the people to their primary task. Work begins again within a month. But the people soon must be encouraged again. Haggai rallies them the second time by prophesying that the spirit of God will remain with them, that God will bring silver and gold from all nations, and that he will fill the new Temple with his glory (2:1-9).

The book concludes with two prophecies uttered later in the same year. The first (2:10-19) questions the priests concerning clean and unclean Temple rituals, condemns certain people, possibly the Samaritans, for their impure ways, and promises fruitfulness now that the Second Temple has been founded. The second prophecy (2:20-23) predicts a day of reckoning when all the heathen nations will be overthrown.

The religious importance of the Book of Haggai lies in its emphasis on the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and on the reinstituting of correct Temple rituals, without which the older beliefs and practices of Judaism might have been lost.

FORM TWO NOTES

GOD IN NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament starts with the birth of JESUS CHRIST. This period coincides with the Romans ruling Palestine. The first empire of the Romans was **Julius Caesar** who was assassinated and was replaced by **Octavian**. Octavian was given the title of *August Caesar* (*Caesar became the title for Roman emperors*). It was during the reign of Octavian that **Jesus Christ** was born.

The Roman Emperors appointed/allowed native vassal rulers to rule their regions i.e. **Herod the Great (Herod I)** was allowed to be a king over Palestine. They also appointed governors to rule over different areas i.e. **Pontius Pilate**. The Roman authorities allowed the Jews to run their own religious affairs. They

did this through **the Sanhedrin**⁸(**the highest Jewish Court**). The Chairman was the **High Priest**⁹, appointed (and dismissed or killed) by the Romans. **Annas** was high priest from 6 A.D. till 15 A.D. He remained influential even after the Romans had replaced him with **Caiaphas**.

HEROD THE GREAT (HEROD I)(Latin Herodes Magnus)- 37 BC-4BC

Herod the Great, son of Antipater of Idumaea, was made king of Judaea, having sided with Rome, and he ruled with Roman favour (37–4 BC). Though he was a good statesman and architect, he was hated by the Jews as a foreigner and semi-Jew. Jesus was born a few years before the end of his reign, and “the slaughter of the innocents,” young children of Bethlehem who were killed as possible pretenders to Herod's throne, was attributed to Herod.

Herod the Great died in 4BC in Jericho and his land, Palestine, was divided among his 3 children these sons were also called Herods (The **Herods** who followed were under the control of Rome):

1. **Herod ARCHELAUS**. This one inherited half of the kingdom (*Judea, Samaria and Idumea* (Matt 2: 21-22)-he was bad as his father. He was deported in AD 6 for his oppressive rule after the elders reported to August Caesar of his behavior, and Judaea then became an imperial province, governed by procurators responsible to the emperor. Rome replaced him with **Pontius Pilate** who also became governor of **Samaria**.
2. **Herod PHILIP II**-inherited regions of East and North of Lake Galilee (*Iturea and Trachonitis*)- (mark 6:17)-he was a good ruler and was praised for his benevolence and justice. He built old Greek town, Paneas at the sources of Jordan River and named it 'Caesarea Philip' (mark 8:27).
3. **Herod ANTIPAS**-became tetrarch of *Galilee and Perae* (Mark 6:14/Luke 3:1)-until AD 39 and, like his father, was a builder, rebuilding Sepphoris and Tiberias before he was banished. Herod Antipas had John the Baptist beheaded and treated Jesus with contempt at Jesus' trial before him, before sending him back to Pontius Pilate, he was hostile and inherited some traits of his father. He married the wife of Philip I his half brother, **Herodias**.
 - He was the one who executed John the Baptist (Mark 6:17-29.)
 - He was the one who is referred to as a 'fox' (Luke 13:32)
 - He took part in the trial of Jesus (Luke 23:6-7)
 -

Pontius Pilate (26AD-36AD)

The Roman emperor **Tiberius** appointed **Pilate**, as a governor over the Roman provinces of **Judea, Samaria, and Idumea in A.D. 26**. His official residence was in Caesarea on the Mediterranean Coast. When he came to Jerusalem, he stays South West of the Temple area called '**Praetorium**'. Pilate kept **that military and administrative office for ten years**. His duties included appointing the Jewish high priest and controlling the Jewish temple funds. He did not find it an easy task to govern the rebellious Jews because of their specific religious practices and customs. The New Testament portrays Pilate as a man who knew that Jesus was innocent but gave in to Jewish pressure and sentenced Him to death. Historians describe Pilate as a very crude and tactless person. Pilate was cruel and stubborn. He executed people without trials i.e. —**Luke 3:1**, reports the death of Galileans killed by him. He allowed Jesus to be crucified (LK 23:2). Apart from the biblical account, however, we know little about his life and work. A fourth-century historian named Eusebius recorded a report that said Pilate committed suicide.

JEWISH GROUPS DURING JESUS' TIME**1. THE PHARISEES**

The name 'Pharisee' means 'separated ones'. This group separated itself from the unclean things like the gentiles, Outcasts, Samaritans, sinners and from other Jews whom they thought to be unclean. They considered themselves as clean and were strict observers of the LAW of Moses, since, they thought that deliverance would come through observance of the law, hence, they did not like violence. Out of 10 Commandments, they made several laws about washing, eating, working – (**LK 11:37-38/6: 1-11**)

NB: this group began in the 2nd Century when Syrians wanted to impose Greek culture in Palestine. Some Jews violently resisted while others remained non-violent, hence "Pharisee movement".

Their beliefs

- they believed in life after death (resurrection)
- They believed in the coming of (political) Messiah
- they believed in the divine providence
- they believed in the tradition of the elders.
- believed in all 24 books of the Jewish Bible (Torah, Prophets, Writings)

Why the group opposes Jesus?

- They thought Jesus had little respect for rules/regulations which they considered important.
- the teaching of Jesus was on love, faith and mercy, rather than on strict observance of the religious rule
- Jesus was denouncing them publicly (Luke 11: 43-44)
- Jesus attracted many people, hence, their popularity was decreasing.
- they feared that Jesus could lead an uprising the thing they disliked

Why Jesus opposed them?

- they paid much attention to rules, forgetting the love for God and neighbor (LK 14: 1-6), hence, they made it difficult for people to know God since, they concentrated on tradition. (11: 52)
- they practiced piety in order to be praised or just to show off to others (Matt 23:1-7)
- the Pharisees find it hard to believe that God loves sinners, especially those who have broken the Law (Luke 5: 29-32)
- they believed that God could not forgive certain sins such as apostasy and adultery.
- they made religion harder for the common people i.e. they demanded tithe on almost everything.
- they were convinced that God thought well of them because of their strict observance of the Law.

2. THE SADUCEES

- They were few in number, were rich and were influential .they were in favour of the Romans since they wanted to keep their wealth.
- They were worldly and politically minded. They were conservative, i.e. did not accept new ideas, hence, and denied life after death and providence.
- They controlled the temple and its treasury.

-They only accepted the Torah.

Why the group opposed Jesus?

-Being rich, they felt attached by Jesus' teaching on riches.

-they were upset with Jesus' teaching on resurrection (Luke 20:27-40)

-Jesus seemed to have more authority over the temple rather than themselves i.e. Jesus cleansed the temple without their permission ((Luke 19:45-46)

3. THE SCRIBES (TEACHERS OF THE LAW/lawyers)

They were responsible:

-for writing, studying the scripture and interpreting the LAW.

-judging cases in Sanhedrin in the temple

-They were rich people since they controlled temple treasury.

-They did not want to mix with sinners, gentiles and outcasts.

-Did not believe in life after death.

Why the group opposed Jesus?

-Jesus taught with authority, yet he was not qualified as a teacher.

-Jesus accused them of religious hypocrisy (Lk 11:39-41; 45-47)

-Jesus disagreed with their teaching on wealth and divorce.

Why Jesus opposed the group?

-they were making a show of Praying

-they were wearing long robes to show off (Matt 23:1-7)

-they abused their status by cheating widows (Lk: 11:52/Mk 12:38-40)

-they forced the people to observe the law yet they themselves did not observe them (Luke 11:46)

4. LEVITES /ASSISTANT PRIESTS

Every boy of the tribe of Aaron could be a priest. There were about 18000 priests during the time of Jesus. They were divided into 24 groups and twice a year every group served in the temple for one or two week. The priest in the group was chosen through the process of **casting out the lot**. The temple was served by **the high priests, the chief priests and the Levites who were also known as Temple assistants**.

Their duties:

In the temple

-leading the people into prayers: both morning and evening prayers.

-offering sacrifices

-burning incense

-taking care of temple treasures

-guarding the temple gates.

In synagogue

-Giving the blessings (benediction)-(Numbers 6:22-27)

-giving advice on matters of the body purity (Leviticus 15:1-32)

-admitting the Jews who were cured of leprosy back into the community (lev.13:1-6)

The chief priest

- They were coming from Jerusalem.
- They were residential priests from the priestly families of Jerusalem.
- They were the members of the Sanhedrin.
- They were taking care of the finances and the temple police

5. ESSENES (QUMRAM GROUP)

-This group is not mentioned in the New Testament. Their name means, “**The holy ones**”. They were against abuse of the high priests in Jerusalem and in protest; they abandoned the public life in about 150 BC. And settled in Qumran in small communities of sharing and caring. They devoted themselves to the study and interpretation of the scriptures.

Their beliefs.

- they rejected the temple of Jerusalem and its high priest.
- they did not offer sacrifices to the temple of Jerusalem.
- they practiced monogamous life (one wife, one man) and some of the members were celibates (not married).
- they practiced asceticism (self punishment).

6. THE HERODIANS

This was a small group consisted of followers of King Herod. They were friendly with the Pharisees; This group was aiming at seeking for man’s happiness such as freedom, peace, love and salvation.

SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

In the Bible, four books bear the name ‘**Gospel**’. These books they all deal with the life of Jesus Christ, his birth, public ministry, death and resurrection. These four gospels portray Jesus as one who was sent from God, did miracles, and taught good ethics. But later, he was hated by Jewish religious leaders. Later, he was crucified and after 3 days, he was raised from the tomb.

All these books narrate these events in so similar way, despite that these four Gospels were written by four different authors. Again, 3 gospels resemble each other in their **wording** and **ordering of the events**. Because of this reason, these 3 gospels (Mark, Luke, and Matthew) are called ‘synoptic gospels’ (seeing together). The word **synoptic** comes from ‘*synoptikos*, “seen together”: ***syn*** meaning “**together with**” and ***optic*** meaning “**seeing**”; therefore, it means “**seeing together**.” John Calvin, the 16th-century Reformer, wrote a commentary on these Gospels as a harmony. Such an arrangement is called a “**synopsis**,” or Gospel harmony.

The word is applied to the Gospels of **Matthew**, **Mark**, and **Luke** because they are so similar in language/wording, content, and the order in which events are recorded. There are numerous theories concerning these similarities. The most common of these is that Matthew and Luke used the Gospel of Mark along with an unknown source (designated as “Q” by Bible scholars- from the German, *Quelle*, meaning ‘source’) to compile their Gospels. No one has an absolute answer to explain the similarities. However, it is possible that each of these Gospel writers shared information with the others, gleaned information from oral tradition or written fragments, or recorded eyewitness accounts. The first gospel to be written was **Mark** (ca. 65 AD), then **Luke** (ca 75 AD), then **Matthew** (ca .85 AD), finally **John** (ca. (95 AD).

The early life of Jesus Christ

We begin our study by reading the first seventeen verses of Matthew (**Mt 1:1-17.**)

WHY MATTHEW BEGINS WITH THIS GENEALOGY?

First of all -it has been observed that: **Matthew wrote for the Jews, hence**, Matthew's gospel was designed to convince Jews that Jesus is the Messiah. The Jews hoped that the Messiah had to be:

I- descendant of Abraham - cf. **Gen 22:18**

II- The Messiah had to be a descendant of David - cf. **Isa 11:1-2, 10**

Genealogy was certainly important to the nation of Israel. if Jesus was not a descendant of Abraham and David, He could not be the Messiah.

Genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1: 1-17)

Genealogy means line of descendants (family tree). The genealogy starts with Abraham the father of Jews. From this genealogy few things have to be noted:

- b) Jesus was born to Joseph who belongs to the dynasty of David, hence, fulfilling the promise of God to David that an offshoot of his branch would rule for ever.
- c) The genealogy emphasized the royal or kingly descent of Jesus.
- d) Jesus is presented as a descendant of Abraham.
- e) The genealogy shows that Jesus came from the people who were righteous in the eyes of God.

The birth of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1: 18-25)-tapiwa(b)/aleph(a)

Mary was engaged to Joseph, a descendants of David. But before they were married, Mary was found with pregnancy by the power of Holy Spirit. Joseph a just man planned to break the engagement privately because he did not want to embarrass Mary publicly. That night an angel of the Lord in a dream stopped Joseph from divorcing Mary, instead, he was told to take Mary as his wife. Mary gave birth to a son named **Jesus**, which means, 'God saves.' Jesus was also called **Emmanuel**, which means 'God is with us.'

Two prophecies that were fulfilled by the birth of Jesus

1. The virginal birth of Mary fulfilled the prophecy of Prophet **Isaiah (7:14)** that '*a virgin would be with a child and will bear a son whose name would be Immanuel'*
2. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem fulfilled the prophecy of prophet Micah that the Messiah would born in Bethlehem. (**Micah 5: 2**)¹⁰.

Titles of Jesus

A) Messiah or Christ

The word '**Messiah**' is a Hebrew word and it means, '**the anointed one.**' The Greek word of the anointed is **Christos** or **Christ**. Therefore, Messiah and Christ are the same and they all mean, 'the anointed one.' In the Old Testament, Kings and Priests were anointed with oil to show that they have been chosen to serve God. That is why Jesus had both duties of a priest and a king.

B) Jesus

This is the Greek form of the Hebrew name '*Yoshua*', which means 'God saves.'

C) The Son of God

He was called the son of God because he partakes of the divine nature.

D) The son of Man.

This title is frequently used by Jesus to refer to himself especially in connection with his earthly activities such as suffering and death.

The visitors from the east: the visit of the magi (wise men from the east) (Matthew 2: 1-12)

This story of "**The Visit Of The Wise Men**" is both interesting and of practical value. Common to many nativity scenes commemorating the birth of Jesus is the presence of "three wise men." This implied is that these men, three in number, visited Jesus while still in the manger.

Summary Of the magi

¹⁰ As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, seemingly insignificant small) among the clans of Judah, from you a king will emerge who will rule over Israel on my behalf, one whose origins(family line) goes back to ancient times.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, where Herod the Great was ruling. Soon afterwards, the wise men (magi) from the East arrived in Jerusalem and inquired where the kings of Jews had been born. These magi were led by a shining star. The magi reached the palace of Herod.

Herod was upset with the birth of the king of Jews. Herod sent the magi to Bethlehem and told them to search for this king of Jews and then come back to him so that he too should worship him. (Herod had an evil intention of killing this baby Jesus). The magi after finding Jesus, they knelt down, worshipped him and gave gifts. The gifts were three:

1. **Gold**-Jesus was a king
2. **Myrrh**- Jesus was saviour or someone who would suffer to save people as portrayed by prophet Isaiah.
3. **Frankincense**- Jesus was a priest.

On their way back, they returned by another road because God warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod. The same night, Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus fled to Egypt. Herod ordered the death of all male children below 2 years in Bethlehem. Herod wanted to kill baby Jesus in the process.

Settlement in Nazareth (Matt. 2: 19-23)

After the of Herod the Great, the parents of Jesus were afraid to settle in the territory of Archelaus, instead, the settled in the territory of Antipas, Nazareth. That's why Jesus was called a Nazarene.

The role of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8)

The coming of Jesus had already been foretold in the Old Testament. For example, **Isaiah 40: 3** talks of a voice of one crying in the wilderness (desert). It says, '*a voice cries out, prepare in the wilderness a road for the Lord! Clear the way in the desert for our God.*'

John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of Jesus as the Messiah. The word John means 'God is gracious.' John the Baptist did his ministry in the desert and around Jordan River. John was the link between the Old and the New Testaments. John is found preaching and prophesying in both the OT and NT.

John prepared the way for the Lord by **preaching** and **baptizing** people who have repented. In short, John preached the baptism of repentance. John baptized people as a symbol of repentance for their sins in preparation for the coming of the messiah who would baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit. This means that the Holy Spirit would purify the hearts of people.

John warned the people about the judgment upon the evil and disobedient people in the world. He warned the Jewish leaders against their outward observance of the law. They looked holier than thou while they were not righteous in their hearts. He warned the Jewish people that they would be punished and would not escape because they were the descendants of Abraham.

That is why John the Baptist is also called the precursor or the forerunner of Jesus Christ, because he came earlier than Jesus in order to make people ready to receive Him as the Messiah. This readiness will be living a holy life as people are waiting for the Messiah.

His preaching was about *justice, honest, responsibility in jobs and acts of charity*. For example:

1. **Ordinary people**- were told to share clothes and food with those who do not have.(Lk. 3:10)
2. **Tax collectors**- should collect what they were supposed to (Lk 3:12)
3. **Soldiers**-should not abuse their power by robbing or accusing people falsely.(Lk 3:15)

Three things that John said about Jesus (**Mtt. 3:11-12**):

- a) Jesus is much stronger than him
- b) John is not worth to untie the sandals of Jesus
- c) Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Reasons that made John the Baptist to be associated with Elijah the prophet (Matt. 3:4)

- He wore a rough coat.
- Ate the food of the desert people. i.e. honey
- Wore a leather belt around his waist C.f. II Kings 1:8

Summary of the roles of John the Baptist

1. He prepared the way for the coming of the Lord.
2. He ushered people to the messianic age.
3. He acted as a precursor or forerunner of Jesus Christ.
4. He condemned the Pharisees for their hypocrisy and the Roman authorities for their evil.
5. He broke the period of prophetic silence that lasted over 400 years between Malachi and himself.
6. He bore witness to Jesus as the messiah.
7. He baptized Jesus in River Jordan.
8. He was the link between the OT and the NT.

Baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist. (Mk 1: 9-11)

The word baptism comes from a Greek word ‘*baptein*, which means “*to dip,*” or ‘to immerse in water’. John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River.

Three things that happened soon after Jesus was baptized:

- The heavens opened
- The Holy Spirit descended on him in a form of a dove.
- The voice was heard from heaven saying, ‘*this is my son whom I am well pleased.*’

Why Jesus was baptized before starting his public ministry? (Yet he was not a sinner)

- He wanted to identify himself with the sinful nature of humankind.
- As a sign that the ministry of John has ended and that the ministry of Jesus is starting
- To show that baptism was genuine and it was approved by God.
- To set an example to his followers to follow him.
- He was baptized because he had taken upon himself the sins of humankind.

Significance of the baptism of Jesus

- Jesus received the power of the Holy Spirit which was necessary for his ministry.
- It ended the confusion that was there. People thought that John was the messiah but God Himself pronounced that Jesus was His Son and the one anointed.
- It demonstrated the humility of Jesus. I.e. he was baptized just like any other person yet he was the son of God. (He accepted to be identified with sinners by accepting to be baptized.)
- The baptism introduced Jesus as the messiah, the Son of God.

Reverence of the baptism to Christianity today

- Christians are given new life
- Christians are given the Holy Spirit; hence, they become children of God.
- Christians are united with that the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- Baptism cleansed Christians and prepares them for the kingdom of God.
- It makes one to be identified with the Christian church.

Temptations of Jesus (Matt. 4: 1-11)

Jesus faced three temptations soon after being baptized. He went into the desert and fasted for 40 days. After 40 days the devil came to test him. The temptations were to test him if he will carry out his ministry in accordance with the will of God.

Summary of the temptations of Jesus

Temptation	Meaning of the temptation	The answer of Jesus
1. ‘if you are the son of God order these stones to turn into bread’ (Matt. 4: 1-4)	The devil was suggesting to Jesus to make his life easier and getting many followers by giving material things to people (handouts)	‘the scripture says human beings cannot live on bread alone, but need every word that God speaks (Dt. 8: 3)’
2. ‘if you are the son of God, throw yourself down for God will give orders to His angels to carry you so that you should not be hurt on the stones (Matt. 4: 5-7)/C.F Psalms 91: 9-12	The devil was suggesting to Jesus to do extra-ordinary miracles or sensational actions in order to test the care of God. These extra-ordinary actions would make people follow him.	‘The scripture says do not put the Lord your God to the test.’ (Dt. 6:16)
3. ‘all these I will give you if you kneel down and worship me’ (Matt. 4: 8-11)	The devil was suggesting to Jesus to use worldly power (politics) to influence people. This would mean idolatry.	‘go away Satan, the scripture says worship the Lord your God and save only him’ (Dt. 6:13)

NB: although Jesus had powers to do what the devil was suggesting, he saw that they were not the proper ways of accomplishing his redemptive mission. After Jesus had rejected the suggestions of Satan we are told that the devil left him for a while.

Chapter 3 The work and the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The calling and the choice of the 12 disciples or apostles (Mk. 1: 16-20; 3: 13-19)

Jesus had 12 disciples who would help him proclaim the Good News. The term **disciple** means a learner while the term an **apostle**, (from Greek *apostolos*, “person sent”), means a follower of Jesus or a missionary or *one who is sent out*. In this sense, apostles were to be sent out to fish out people and bring them to Jesus using His name and authority. These 12 disciples whose climax of graduating into apostles would be on the day of Pentecost, where these disciples received the Holy Spirit.

The first disciples to be called were **four** and all these were **fishermen**. They were called while fishing in the Lake Galilee. The first two were brothers; Simon (Peter), and Andrew. The last two were also brothers, the sons of Zebedee whose names were James and John. These brothers were given the nicknames of ‘**Boanerges**’ or ‘men of thunder.’

Names of all 12 apostles are as follows:

The full list of the Twelve is given with some variation in Mark 3, Matthew 10, and Luke 6 as:i.

- i. Simon also called Peter, which means ‘rock.’
- ii. James and John, the sons of Zebedee.
- iii. Andrew.
- iv. Philip.
- v. Bartholomew.
- vi. Matthew. Once the tax collector.
- vii. Thomas.
- viii. James, the son of Alphaeus. He was also called ‘James the less.’
- ix. Thaddaeus, or Judas, the son of James.
- x. Simon the Cananaean, or the Zealot (patriot).
- xi. Judas Iscariot (he was the treasure of the group and he was the one who betrayed Jesus)

The privileges of the Twelve were to be in continual attendance on their master and to be the recipients of his special teaching and training. Three of them, **Peter**, **James**, and **John**, formed an inner circle who alone were permitted to witness such events as the raising of Jairus' daughter (**Mark 5:37**; Luke 8:51), the Transfiguration (**Mark 9**; Matthew 17; Luke 9), and the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (**Mark 14:33**; Matthew 26:37).

Special importance seems to have been attached to the number 12, which some scholars interpret as a reference to the 12 tribes of Israel. When a gap had been left by the defection and death of the traitor Judas Iscariot, immediate steps were taken to fill it by the election of Matthias (Acts 1). In this case the number 12 represented the 12 tribes of Israel. This means the apostle are to lay the foundation of the new Israel or new people of God just like the 12 sons formed the foundation of the people of God, the Israelites.

Jesus started his ministry of proclaiming the Good News of God in Galilee when John the Baptist had been arrested and put in prison. He said:

- The kingdom of God is near
- Repent
- Believe in the Good News

The rejection of Jesus in Nazareth (Mk 6: 1-6)

At the beginning of His ministry. Jesus taught in the temple, synagogues and in the open space. On Sabbath Jesus and his disciples went to his hometown Nazareth and preached in a synagogue. The people were surprised to where did Jesus get the wisdom and miracles. The people did not accept him as a teacher.

Why did they not believe in him?

1. They expected God to send His message through someone not like Jesus who was the son of Mary and a son of a carpenter.
2. Jealousy

Jesus told them that prophets are respected in other places except in their home areas and among his relatives. Jesus did not perform many miracles there, since, people lacked faith in him.

The ministry of Jesus was marked by many **works** that include *miracles, teaching in parables, the transfiguration, death, resurrection and ascension.*

Miracles of Jesus

A miracle is an extra ordinary event that cannot be explained by ordinary natural power. The miracles of Jesus were done to symbolize the triumph of God over the power of evil and as a part of divine mission to show the love of God for his people and the concern for the people. These miracles included:

- Healing miracles
- Nature miracles
- Feeding the hungry.

1. Healing of Simon's mother in law (Mk. 1: 29-34)

One day Jesus left the synagogue and went to the house of Simon and Andrew. He went with two disciples, James and John. They found Simon's mother in law sick with fever. Jesus healed her by taking her hand up. The fever left her and she served them. After sunset, the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon possessed to be healed.

2. Healing of a leper (Mk. 1: 40-4)

One day a leper came to Jesus, he knelt and begged to make him clean. Moved with pity, Jesus healed him by touching him. Jesus sent the man home with three orders:

- not to tell anyone.
- To show himself to the priest to be certified (Levit. 13: 3-8)

- To offer sacrifices according to the Law of Moses.

NB: According to the Jewish law, Jesus became unclean by touching the leper. However, Jesus showed that he cared more about the people than the law.

3. Healing of the paralytic man (Mk. 2: 1-12)

This miracle took place in Capernaum in the house of Peter and Andrew. Four men carrying the paralyzed man could not enter the house through the door because the house was full of people. The men made a hole in the roof and lowered the paralyzed down to where Jesus was. When Jesus saw the faith of the men, he told the paralytic that his sins are forgiven. This statement angered the scribes. They regarded what Jesus said as a blasphemy¹¹, since, only God could forgive sins.

Jesus knew their thoughts and he asked them which was easier to forgive sins and to heal. He told them that he has got authority to forgive and to heal, hence, he told the man to stand up, take his mat and go to his home. All the people were amazed at this miracle.

4. Healing on the Sabbath (Mk. 3:1-6)

Sabbath was a day of resting and no one was allowed to do any work otherwise, great consequences will occur if one violates this day (Numb. 15: 32-36).

One Sabbath Jesus went into the synagogue and found a man who had a paralyzed and a withered hand. The Pharisees and the scribes watched closely to trap Jesus. They wanted to see if he will heal the man on the Sabbath.

Jesus knew their thoughts and asked them whether it was lawful to do good or harm on the Sabbath, to kill or save life. People did not answer him. This angered Jesus. Then he told the man to stretch out his hand and the man was healed. Immediately, the Pharisees and the Herodians went out and planned how to destroy Jesus.

5. Calming the storm on Lake Galilee (Mk. 4: 35-41)

Jesus and his disciples decided to cross Lake Galilee from west to east to rest after teaching people by the sea. As they were crossing it, a great storm arose and the waves were almost filling it with water.

Jesus was asleep because he was tired. The disciples awakened him up saying, ‘ teacher don’t you care that we are about to die.’ Jesus asked the sea to be peaceful and be still. The wind stopped and there was complete calm. Jesus accused them for lacking faith, while the disciples were astonished and wondered who Jesus was that he could silence the wind and the storm.

NB: This miracle shows two things:

- Divine authority of Jesus over nature (since it is only God who rules the sea-Psalms 89: 9).
- Humanity of Jesus, since he got tired and was sleeping.

6 . The healing of a man with evil spirits in the land of Gerasa (Gerasene demoniac)-Mk. 5: 1-20

After crossing the lake, they reached the land of Gerasa which was inhabited by gentiles (because of the presence of pigs). As soon as Jesus go out of the boat, a man with many evil spirits approached Jesus.

Description of the man

¹¹ Crime of speaking or publishing words that vilify or ridicule God, the Bible, or religious beliefs. In other ways, by forgiving the sins, Jesus made himself equal to God, hence, disrespecting God.

- He was possessed by evil spirits (demons).
- lived among the tombs.
- Night and day he cried and wondered among the tombs.
- He had great physical power because he could break chains.
- He was bruising himself with stones.

The man knelt down and screamed saying, '*Jesus son of the most High God, what do you want with me...*' the name of the man was a 'mob' meaning that he had many demons in him. The evil spirits begged Jesus to send them to the pigs and Jesus allowed them to go. The man was cured but the whole herd of pigs rushed down into the Lake and were all drowned.

The villagers came and were both afraid and angry with Jesus. They begged him to leave their land. The cured man wanted to follow Jesus but he was told to go home and proclaim what the Lord has done to him.

NB: Jesus sent the man home to preach Good News to the gentiles.

7- The healing of a woman with hemorrhage and the raising of the Jairus's daughter (Mk. 5: 21-43)

After crossing the Lake again, Jesus found many people waiting for him. Among the crowd was Jairus. Jairus was one of the Jewish rulers of the synagogues. He was waiting for Jesus because his only daughter who was 12 years was very sick and at the point of death. So he wanted Jesus to heal her.

While Jesus was on his way to Jairus' house, a large crowd followed him and pressed against him. In the crowd there was a woman who suffered a disease called hemorrhage for 12 years. She spent much money on many doctors who tried to heal her, but her condition was worsening all the time. The woman heard about Jesus, and had faith in him. She believed that she could be healed by touching his cloak. She touched Jesus secretly. Immediately her bleeding stopped at once and she felt better inside as a sign of being cured.

Jesus realized that some powers had gone out of him. He then, asked who had touched his clothes.

The woman came while trembling and afraid. She explained her story to Jesus. Jesus sent her away by citing that her faith had cured her.

While Jesus was speaking to a woman, some men came from the house of Jairus and told him that her daughter has died and needed not to bother Jesus. Jesus told him not to worry but to believe.

Three disciples accompanied Jesus (Peter, James, John). People were crying and wailing loudly. He told the people that the child was not dead but asleep. People laughed at him. He then he went where the child was and said to her '*talitha koum*' (little girl woke up). The girl got up and began walking around. People were astonished and Jesus gave strict orders not to let people know about this.

8. The feeding of the 5000 people (Mk 6: 30-44)

In his ministry Jesus also fed those who were physically and spiritually hungry. On this day, Jesus and his disciples were hungry and tired, yet many people were waiting to listen to Jesus. Jesus took his disciples on boat to a quiet place for them to have a rest. However, people saw them and got there before them. Jesus was moved with pity and began teaching them until it was very late.

The disciples suggested to Jesus to send the people away so that they could buy food. Jesus instead, told the disciples to give the people food. The only food available were 5 loaves and 2 fish. The crowd was made to sit down in groups of fifties and hundreds. Jesus took the 5 loaves and 2 fish and looked up the sky and gave thanks. He broke the loaves and gave to his disciples to distribute to the people. All the

people ate and were satisfied. The left overs filled the 12 baskets. On this day Jesus fed 5000 men excluding women and children.

9. Walking on the waters (Mk. 6: 45-53)

After feeding the crowd, Jesus made his disciples cross the lake to Beth-saida, while himself was dismissing the crowd and after that he went on a mountain to pray. The disciples were in the middle of the sea while Jesus was on the banks. Jesus saw them struggling and went out to them while walking on the water. The disciples were terrified. They thought that Jesus was a ghost. Jesus told them to be courageous and not to be afraid, for he was Jesus. He then, entered the boat and the winds stopped. The disciples were astonished because they had not yet understood how the 5000 people were fed with five loaves and two fish.

10. Healing of the blind man (Mk. 8: 22-26)

One day Jesus came to Beth-saida and some people brought a blind man to him and begged Jesus to cure him. Jesus took the man by hand and took him out to the village. Jesus then put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, but was not cured instantly because he could see people like tree walking. Jesus laid his hands on him again and the man regained his sight. The man was ordered not to spread the news in the village but to go home.

TEACHINGS OF JESUS: THE TEACHINGS IN PARABLES

Jesus often used spiritually significant fictional narratives called parables to illustrate his teachings. A parable is a short story taken from the daily life of people to teach a spiritual truth or a certain moral. These parables were often stories about simple, everyday events.

Reasons why Jesus used parables in his teachings?

1. To move and stimulate his listeners by making the message interesting so that people would be alert as the lessons is continuing.
2. To make people think for themselves critically.
3. To conceal his true identity as the Messiah since, many people had a wrong idea of who Jesus was.
4. Parables enabled one to communicate effectively, since; they were good avenues for passing important teaching. For example, on how to use wealth wisely.
5. Parables were used to separate serious seekers of the kingdom of God from the onlookers.
6. Parables were used to teach about the kingdom of God and the nature of God such as His mercy.

One of the parables found in the Gospel of Mark is the **parable of the sower (MK 4: 1-9)**. It can also be called "**The Parable Of the Four Soils.**" In this Parable, Jesus tells a story about seeds scattered on the ground and left to grow. It was told by Jesus to illustrate different reactions to the Gospel message. This parable was said when Jesus was in the boat beside Lake Galilee. There was a man who was sowing some corn seeds. These seeds fell in different types of soil.

In this parable:

- The **sower** represents Jesus.
- The **seeds** represent the message of God.
- **Different types of soil** represent different hearts of people.

The parable suggests that the fate of the word of God is to some extent dependent on the hearts into which it is sown.

Summary of the parable

Where the seeds fell	What happened to it	meaning
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1. Along the path (first soil)	Birds ate it up	People who hear God's message and do not take care of it so Satan comes and takes it away.
2. On rocky ground (The Second Soil)	Grew but soon dried up because there was little soil.	People who hear the word and immediately receives it with joy yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they give up. (they abandon the word) NB: an emotional reception without a strong foundation based upon the Word will not enable one to stand against tribulation and persecution
3. Among thorn Bushes(The Third Soil)	Grew but choked by the thorns and produced no corn	People who hear the word but whose ability to bear fruit is choked by: <i>the cares of this world the deceitfulness of riches, pleasures of life</i> . These three "thorns" can cause people to be unfruitful. They detract the minds from what is truly important.
4. In good soil (The fourth Soil)	Grew and produced corn multiplying 30, 60, or even 100.	People who hear the word and understands it and the word bears fruits.

The faith of a syro-phoenician woman: the gentile woman and her daughter (MK: 7: 24-30)

In this story Jesus went to the region of Tyre when he went into a house. He did not want anyone to know, but, a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him and came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, of Syrophoenician origin. She asked him to cast the demon out of her daughter .Jesus said to her, "**Let the children feed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and to throw it to the dogs**". She answered, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he said to her, "Because you said this, you may go. The demon has left your daughter." She went home and found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

In this parable:

Children refer to Jews, whereas **dogs** refer to gentiles.

The mission of the 12 disciples: the 12 are sent out (Mk 6: 7-13)

The 12 disciples were sent out for the following reasons:

1. To preach the good news
2. To drive out demons
3. To heal the sick

Instructions on this journey

- They should not take anything apart from the stick:
 - No bread
 - No beggars bag
 - No money in their pockets
- Wear sandals and put on one tunic
- Must stay in the same house if they are welcomed until they leave.
- If not welcomed, they must leave and shake the dust off their feet as a warning to them for having refused the Gospel.

NB: the aim of not carrying anything or many things is not to be distracted from the work they had to do.

Other important events

1. The transfiguration of Jesus (Mk. 9: 2-13)

Transfiguration means change in appearance. This is the incident where the appearance of Jesus changed completely.

It occurs at Mt Tabor (Hermon) when Jesus takes his disciples **Peter, James, and John** to a mountain to pray. While there he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. At the same time, Old Testament prophets, **Moses** and **Elijah** appeared talking to Jesus. Peter suggested to Jesus to build 3 tents, two for the two prophets and one for Jesus. As he was talking a cloud came over them and a voice from the cloud said, "**This is my dear Son, listen to him.**" As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone about this until the son of man had rose from the dead.

NB: **Moses** symbolized the Law

Elijah symbolized the prophets

The appearance of these two to Jesus meant that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and prophets.

Importance of the transfiguration in the ministry of Jesus and to christens

1. It confirmed that Jesus is the Son of God, since, the voice was heard, **This is my dear Son, listen to him.**"
2. It proved that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and prophets
3. The dazzling brilliance of the body of Jesus confirmed that Jesus was Holy and was glorified.
4. It proved that God was with Jesus in everything he did just like God was with Moses (this was symbolized by the presence of the cloud)
5. It gave Jesus encouragement and assurance that His coming suffering to save the people was in accordance with the will of God.
6. The appearance of the two OT prophets proved that there is life after death. This gives Christians hope of eternal life.

The declaration of Peter about Jesus (Mk 8: 27-30)

Jesus took three disciples to villages near Caesarea Philippi. He asked them, 'Who do people say I Am?' The disciples gave three answers:

- a) Some say Jesus was John the Baptist
- b) Other say Jesus was Elijah
- c) Others say Jesus was one of the Old Testament prophets

Then Jesus asked his disciples 'who do you say IAM?' Peter answered that Jesus is the Messiah. Then, Jesus ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. Why? Because the Jews could have expected Jesus to use violence against the Romans, since the Jews were expecting a political Messiah.

Jesus predicted his suffering and the suffering of his followers (Mk 8: 31-9:1)

Jesus said that the son of man would suffer, rejected by elders, priest and scribes. He would be killed and after three days he will rise again.

After this prediction, Peter took Jesus aside and rebuke Jesus that he should not allow God to bring this suffering to him. Jesus rebuked Peter by saying, ' go away Satan, for the plans of God are not humans.'

Why did Jesus rebuke Peter?

Peter just like any Jew, did not believe that the Messiah can suffer, but that, the Messiah will use military force to defeat other nations and make the Jews free people.

The Journey to Jerusalem and the third prediction about his suffering (Mk. 10:32-34)

Jesus made up his mind and go to Jerusalem. He psychologically prepared His disciples for his death as they were on their to Jerusalem. It was a courageous decision as he knew he would be arrested, tortured and killed but after three days he would rise again. Jesus was going ahead of them and they were surprised and the disciples were afraid.

The request of James and John (Mk. 10: 35-45)

James and John (sons of Zebedee) asked a special favour from Jesus. They asked Jesus that one should sit with him at his right and another at his left in the glory of Jesus. They were answered that they do not know what they were asking. Then Jesus defined greatness as servant hood. Lastly, he told them that the choice of who should sit at the right or left was not of Jesus but God himself.

The passion of Christ: The Holy Week

Jerusalem at Passover season was the delight of the Jews and the despair of the Romans. Thousands of devout Jews from all over the world arrived in the Holy City, their hearts filled with excitement and nationalistic fervor. The population of Jerusalem tripled during this feast, making it necessary for the Roman military units to be on special alert. They lived with the possibility that some enthusiastic Jewish Zealot might try to kill a Roman official or incite a riot, and there was always potential for disputes among the various Jewish religious groups.

Into this situation came Jesus with less than a week remaining before He would be crucified outside the city walls. On the road Jesus took, a traveler would arrive first at **Bethany** and then come to **Bethphage**, about two miles from Jerusalem. The elevation at this point makes one to view the Holy City. The Lord permitted His followers to give him a public demonstration in His honor. Jesus sent two of His disciples to Bethphage to get the colt (donkey) that He needed for the event. The disciples were told that if anyone asked them why they were untying the donkey, they had to answer that the Lord wants it and will bring it back.

Jesus rode on the donkey as he was entering Jerusalem. People spread their garments on the road and others took branches of trees and spreading them on the road (C.F 2 Kings 9:13)/ Psalm 118:25–26. People were shouting, '*Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord...Hosanna in the highest.*'

Why Jesus used a colt/donkey?

- It symbolized humility
- He was fulfilling the prophecy of Prophet Zechariah(9:9)- 'Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Look! Your king is coming to you: he is legitimate and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey'. By riding on the donkey, He declared Himself to be Israel's King and Messiah. Hence, he deliberately challenged the religious leaders. This set in

motion the official plot that led to His arrest, trial, and crucifixion. The Jewish leaders had decided not to arrest Him during the feast.

- **To show that he has come to bring peace and not war.** Jesus was not a military Messiah as the Jews expected.

After entering Jerusalem, he entered into the temple looked at everything, but since it was late, Jesus left the city and spent the night in **Bethany**, where it was safer and quieter.

Monday-Cleansing of the temple (11: 15-19).

The following day, Jesus came back to the Temple and cleansed it. How?

- he drove out those who were buying and selling goods in the temple.
- he overturned the tables of the money changers and tables of dove sellers.
- he did not allow anyone to carry merchandise (goods) through the temple courts.

Jesus quoted two Scriptures to defend what He did. He said: '*my house temple will be called a house of prayer for the people of all nations*' (**Isaiah 56:7**), '*but you have turned it into a hideout for thieves*' (**Jeremiah 7:11.**) The Jews looked on the temple primarily as a place of sacrifice, but Jesus saw it as a place of prayer. True prayer is in itself a sacrifice to God (Ps. 141:1-2). Jesus had a spiritual view of the Jewish religion, while the leaders promoted a traditional view that was cluttered with rules and regulations. The chief priests and the teachers of the Law started looking ways for destroying Jesus.

Wednesday:

The plot to kill Jesus (Mk14:1-2)

The chief priest and the scribes agreed not to arrest Jesus during the festival for fear that people may riot. It was two days before the festival.

The anointing at Bethany and the betrayal (Mk 14: 3-11)

Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper and was at the table. A woman came in with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume of nardos. She broke the Jar and poured the perfume on his head. There were three consequences to her act of worship. **First**, the *house was filled with the beautiful fragrance of the ointment*. **Secondly**, people criticized the woman for wasting her money. The people around saw this action as a waste of oil, because it could have been sold and the money would be given to the poor. **Thirdly**, Jesus commended and defended the action of this woman by saying that.

- The poor will be always with them but not him.
- The woman had already prepared His body for burial as she anointed His head (Mark 14:3) and His feet (John 12:3). Hence, the woman showed her love for Jesus while He was still alive.

On the day, Judas Iscariot went to the chief priest to betray Jesus. The chief priests promised him money. So Judas watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them.

Thursday

On this day three things happened:

1. The last supper

2. The arrest of Jesus in the Gethsemane
3. The first trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin (at night)

The last supper- In the Upper Room- (Mark 14:12-26)

The Passover lamb was supposed not to have any blemish, and then slain in the temple precincts and the supper eaten within the Jerusalem city limits. For the Jews, the Passover feast was the memorial of a past victory, but Jesus would institute a new supper that would be the memorial of His death.

On this day, Jesus sent two disciples into the city and were told to follow the man who will carry a jar of water who will show them the room where they will celebrate the supper. Since for the Jews the new day began with sundown, it would be Friday when Jesus and His disciples met in the Upper Room. This was His last Passover, and on that day, He would fulfill the Passover by dying on the cross as the spotless Lamb of God (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Peter 2:21-24).

NB: The original Passover feast consisted of the roasted lamb, the unleavened bread, and the dish of bitter herbs (Ex. 12:8-20). The lamb reminded the Jews of the blood that was applied to the doorposts in Egypt to keep the angel of death from slaying their firstborn. The unleavened bread reminded them of their haste in leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:39), and the bitter herbs spoke of their suffering as Pharaoh's slaves. At the time of Jesus, the Jews had added to the ceremony the drinking of **four cups of wine** diluted with water:

1. After a solemn blessing, the first cup was drunk, followed by bitter herbs.
2. Then someone read the Passover story from Exodus 12, Psalm 11 (the little Hallel) was sung, and the second cup was drunk.
3. Then came the main meal of lamb and unleavened bread, after which the third cup, the 'cup of blessing' was drunk.
4. Finally, Psalms 114-118 (the 'Great Hallel') were sung, and the Passover came to its climax when the fourth cup, the 'cup of consummation,' was drunk.

This is the way Jesus and his disciples would have celebrated the Passover. However, the change came at the third cup. Jesus did something that was hard for the disciples to understand at that time (Mk 14:22-26):

While they were eating, he took bread, and after giving thanks he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take it. This is my body." And after taking the cup and giving thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, that is poured out for many. I tell you the truth, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Here was the third cup, the 'cup of blessing,' but Jesus said that the bread and wine were his body and blood. "Blood of the Covenant" was a quotation from Exodus 24: 8, a passage that all the disciples would have recognized: it referred to the ratification of the covenant between God and Israel. Jesus talks as though he is introducing a new covenant, one that will be ratified with his own blood.

Next in the liturgy was the singing of a hymn, and then should come the 'cup of consummation.' But Jesus said that he would not drink wine again, so we read that 'when they sung a hymn, they went out

to the Mont Olives.' What it means, Jesus and his disciples left the Passover before it was finished, which means Jesus still has one cup to drink, the 'cup of consummation.'

During the meal, Jesus revealed that one of them will betray him. Both of them denied. After the meal, he left the room and went to Mt. Olive.

Meaning of the Passover according to Jesus

- Jesus represented the Passover sacrificial lamb.
- The bread symbolized his body.
- The wine symbolized his blood.

This means his body would be broken and eaten for the salvation of his followers. The bloodshed of Jesus on the cross refers to the blood of the Passover lamb that was slaughtered and its blood was put on the doorposts of the Israelites to save them from the angel of death. Hence, the blood of Jesus would save the whole world.

Importance of the Lord supper to Christians today.

1. It makes the presence of Jesus real
2. It is spiritual nourishment that brings new life to Christians and renews the faith.
3. It reminds them the love which Jesus has for the humanity.
4. It is an act of thanksgiving as well as repentance through which Christians receive blessings and forgiveness of sins.
5. It symbolically signifies the heavenly feast that Christians will share in the kingdom of God.

The arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-52)

On the way to Gethsemane, Jesus told them that all will desert him. To emphasize this point, he quoted the Book of Prophet **Zechariah (13: 7):** '*I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.*' But He then assured them that He would meet them again in Galilee after His resurrection. But Peter challenged that he will not leave Jesus alone even if all will desert him.

Jesus told him that before the cock crows twice, he would have denied him three times. Meanwhile, Judas Iscariot hurried to the house of High priest.

At Mt. Olives, Jesus entered a garden called 'Gethsemane' in order to pray. He took three disciples with him (Peter, James and John). The disciples were told to keep watch. The disciples however were tired and fell asleep. Jesus prayed three times the same prayer:

"Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Each time, he came to his disciples, he found them asleep, but the third time, he told them that the hour has come, the son of man is now being handed over to the power of sinners.' As he was speaking, Judas Iscariot arrived with a crowd armed with swords and clubs. They were sent by the chief priests, scribes and the elders. Judas kissed Jesus as the sign that He was the one to arrest. Then all the disciples left him and fled.

NB: The fact that Judas brought such a large group of armed men is evidence that neither he nor the religious leaders really understood Jesus. They thought that Jesus would try to escape, or that His followers would put up a fight, or that perhaps He might do a miracle. Our Lord's words in Mark 14:49 were proof that He was in control, for they could have arrested Him many times earlier, except that His hour had not yet come.

The trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:53-65)

Both the Jewish trial and the Roman trial were in three stages. The Jewish trial was opened by **Annas**, the former high priest (John 18:13–24). It then moved to the **full council to hear witnesses** (Mark 14:53–65)- two witnesses were required to accuse the person (Deut. 17:6). The **final stage** was an early morning session for the final vote of condemnation (Mark 15:1).

The Sanhedrin was assembled and the witnesses were ready but they did not agree with their testimonies. Throughout this time of false accusation, Jesus said nothing (Isa. 53:7)

Before the council Jesus was accused of:

1. Threatening to destroy Jerusalem Temple (14:57-58).
2. He committed blasphemy by equating himself with God. (Mk 14:61-64)

But when the high priest asked him if he was the Messiah Jesus replied and testified clearly that he was indeed the Son of God. The title “Son of man” is messianic (Dan. 7:13), and the members of the council knew exactly what Jesus was saying: He was claiming to be God come in human flesh! This claim, of course, was blasphemy to the Jews, and they declared Him guilty and worthy of death. Since it was irregular for the Sanhedrin to vote on capital cases at night, the council met again early the next morning and gave the official sentence (Mark 15:1).

Peter denies Jesus Christ (Mk 14: 66-72)

While the Lord was being mocked and abused, Peter was in the courtyard warning himself before the fire, at the same time, trying to escape detection. However, he was detected.

Firstly, one of the high priest's **servant girls** said to Peter '*You also were with Jesus of Nazareth,*' Peter, denied knowing anything about Jesus. Then he went out. Then the cock crowed. The same servant girl saw Peter and she started telling the bystanders that Peter is one of them. And again Peter denied knowing Jesus. Finally, the bystanders accused him of being one of the disciples, but Peter vehemently denied knowing Jesus, and even put himself under a curse. Then the cock crowed for the second time and the Lord's prediction was fulfilled (C.f Mark 14:30). Peter remembered what Jesus told him. He went out quickly and wept bitterly.

Reasons why Peter denied Jesus

- ❖ He was not confident enough in Jesus and his protection.
- ❖ He was angry and disappointed that Jesus had not resisted during his arrest.
- ❖ He did not recall Jesus' saying about persecution on account of the Son of man therefore he was afraid of being killed.
- ❖ He did not pray enough in Gethsemane .i.e. he was sleeping instead of praying.

Friday morning

Jesus before Pontius Pilate (Mark 15:1-15)

As soon as their early morning meeting was over, and the verdict officially recorded, the Jewish leaders delivered Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. The governor usually resided at Caesarea, but it was his custom to be in Jerusalem each year for the feast. His presence pleased some of the Jews, and he could be on hand if any problems arose among the thousands of people crowded into Jerusalem. Roman governors held court early in the morning, so he was quite prepared when they brought the prisoner to him.

The Jewish council had to convince Pilate that Jesus was guilty of a capital crime and therefore worthy of death. The elders, the scribes and the council accused Jesus as a **political traitor** who wanted to overthrow the Roman rule: Jesus claimed to be a king and He stirred up the people. The council presented Jesus as a dangerous revolutionary who was undermining the authority of Rome.

NB: The Gospel of John gives us the most details of the Roman trial, and when you combine the Gospel records, you discover that Pilate repeatedly stated that he found no fault in Jesus (John 18:38; Luke 23:14; John 19:4; Luke 23:22; Matt. 27:24). His problem was that he lacked the courage to stand for what he believed. He wanted to avoid a riot (Matt. 27:24), so he was “willing to content the people” (Mark 15:15).

Pilate questioned Jesus, but Jesus said nothing, but the chief priests kept accusing Him and trying to wear down the governor’s resistance.

It was a custom during Passover feast that the governor would release one prisoner. Pilate wanted to release Jesus. So the governor offered the people a choice—Jesus the Nazarene, or Barabbas who was the murderer and insurrectionist—thinking that surely sanity would prevail and they would ask to have Jesus released. But the chief priests had prepared the crowd carefully (Mark 15:11), and they asked for Barabbas to be set free and Jesus to be crucified. Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent and that the chief priests were jealous of Jesus. Though he knew the truth, he allowed Jesus to be crucified and he released Bar abbas.

Why Pilate bow down to the demand of the Jews though he knew that Jesus was innocent?

- *Setting the Jesus free would have caused unrest in Palestine, hence, rioting.*
- *He feared that he might lose his job if the Jews lodged a complaint against him at Rome that he is a friend of a rebel.*
- *To satisfy the people, hence, maintaining peace.*

How did the soldiers mock Jesus?

- They put a purple robe on him and crown of thorns around his head and began saluting him saying. ‘ long live the king of the Jews.’
- They struck his head with a reed.
- They spat on him.
- They knelt down in homage to him.

After they have mocked him, Jesus was taken to Golgotha to be crucified.

The crucifixion of Jesus (Mark 15:21-32)

According to law, the guilty victim had to carry his cross, or at least the cross beam, to the place of execution, and Jesus was no exception. He left Pilate's hall bearing His cross but He could not continue; so the soldiers forced **Simon of Cyrene** to carry the cross for Him up to Golgotha. *Golgotha* is a Hebrew word that means "skull." He was crucified outside the city walls, together with three robbers.

Crucifixion was one of the most horrible forms of death ever devised by man. The condemned man, after being whipped, or "scourged," dragged the crossbeam of his cross to the place of punishment, where the upright shaft was already fixed in the ground. Stripped of his clothing either then or earlier at his scourging, he was bound fast with outstretched arms to the crossbeam or nailed firmly to it through the wrists.

The crossbeam was then raised high against the upright shaft and made fast to it about 3 metres from the ground. Next, the feet were tightly bound or nailed to the upright shaft. A ledge inserted about halfway up the upright shaft gave some support to the body; evidence for a similar ledge for the feet is rare and late. Death, apparently caused by exhaustion or by heart failure, could be hastened by shattering the legs (*crurifragium*) with an iron club, so that shock and asphyxiation soon ended his life. It was also a customary for the victims to be given a narcotic potion that would help deaden the pain (Prov. 31:6), but our Lord refused. Crucifixion was most frequently used to punish political or religious agitators, pirates, slaves, or those who had no civil rights.

Over the criminal's head was placed a placard or a notice stating his name and his crime. Pilate wrote: "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

How was Jesus mocked on the cross?

- Those who passed by:** they shook their head and said '*Aha you who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself and come down from the cross.*' (They mocked Him as Prophet (Mark 15:29) and as Saviour (Mark 15:31))
- The chief priests and the scribes:** they said, '*he saved others he cannot save himself, let the Messiah come down from the cross now so that we may see and believe.*' (They mocked Him as King (Mark 15:32))
- The two thieves also insulted Jesus.**

The death of Jesus (Mk. 15:33-41)

At noon, *the sixth hour* (v. 33) a miraculous **darkness** came over the land which lasted for three hours. (*It was also an announcement that judgment was coming and men had better be prepared.*) At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud shout, '*Eloi eloi lema Sabachthani*' (My God my God why did you abandon me). Others thought Jesus was calling Elijah. Jesus cried loudly and died. Upon his death, the curtain of the temple was torn into two from top to bottom meaning that

- The end of the Old Covenant with Israel and the beginning of the New Covenant between God and all people.
- The way to God is now opened to everyone which was at first closed. The veil had separated man from God, but now, through His death, Jesus had opened for the whole world a "new and living way."

NB: The four Gospels report that Jesus spoke **the last seven statements/words** from the cross before he died. Three of them before the darkness came:

1. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (**Luke 23:34**).
2. "Today you will be with Me in paradise." **Luke 23:43.**
3. "Woman, behold thy son!... Behold thy mother!" (**John 19:26–27**).
4. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (see Ps. 22:1)
5. "I thirst" (**John 19:28**)
6. "It is finished!" (**John 19:30**)
7. "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit" (**Luke 23:46**; and see **Ps. 31:5**)

The centurion (Roman Officer) after seeing how Jesus died, he confessed that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. Among the women who watched how Jesus died were:

- a) Mary Magdalene.
- b) Salome- she was the wife of Zebedee and mother of the apostles **James** and **John**.
- c) Mary the mother of younger James and Joseph

NB: Some of these women provided Jesus with essential needs and others followed him to listen to his preaching. these women stood near the cross until the very end.

The Burial of Jesus (Mark 15:42–47)

The Jews recognized two evenings: early evening," from 3 to 6 o'clock, and "evening," after 6 o'clock, when the new day would begin. It was important that the place of execution be quickly cleared, because the Jewish Sabbath was about to begin, and that Sabbath was a "high day" because of the Passover. A wealthy member of the Sanhedrin, **Joseph of Arimathea**, was ready to take care of the body of Jesus. Joseph was also a secret follower of Jesus. He was assisted by Nicodemus, also a member of the council (John 19:38–42).

The way Jesus was buried fulfilled prophecy of Isaiah (**53:9**). The fact that He was buried is proof that Jesus actually died on the cross, for the Roman officials would not have released the body without proof that Jesus was dead. The large stone covered the entrance of the tomb.

The Resurrection of Jesus (Mark 16:1–8)

Sunday morning, three women came early to the tomb carrying **spices** to complete the anointing that Joseph and Nicodemus had so hastily begun. On the way, they were worried of who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb. The women found that the stone had already been rolled away. Inside the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side. They were afraid but the young man told them not to be afraid. He told them that Jesus is alive. He told them to inform Peter and others to meet Jesus in Galilee. The women did not tell anyone about this because they were afraid.

The appearances of the risen Christ (Mk. 16: 9-14)

After resurrection, Jesus appeared for 40 days to different people.

- 1) The first was **Mary Magdalene** (Mark 16:9–11).
- 2) Then, to the **two disciples** who were going into the country (Emmaus)-they recognized him as Jesus was breaking the bread. (Mark 16:12)
- 3) Finally, to the **eleven** disciples in the Upper Room as they were sitting at the table.(Mark 16:14)

The commissioning of the disciples (Mk. 16: 15-20)

Jesus sent the disciples into the world to preach the good news to the whole human race and baptize those who will believe.

Signs that will accompany their mission

- Driving out demons
- Speaking in tongues
- Picking up snakes with bare hands
- Drinking poison but would not die.
- Lay hands on sick people and would get well.

Most of the signs listed here did take place in the days of the Apostles and are recorded in the Book of Acts. The closest thing we have to taking up serpents is Paul's experience on Malta (Acts 28:3–6), but we have no biblical record of anyone drinking poison and surviving. The person who takes up serpents just to prove his or her faith is yielding to the very temptation Satan presented to Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple (Matt. 4:5–7): "Cast Yourself down and see if God will take care of You," Satan said in effect. He wants us to "show off" our faith and force God to perform unnecessary miracles. Jesus refused to tempt God, and we should follow His example. Yes, God cares for His children when, in His will, they are in dangerous places; but He is not obligated to care for us when we foolishly get out of His will. We are called to live by faith, not by chance, and to trust God, not tempt Him.

The ascension of Jesus into heaven (Luke 24: 50-55)

Jesus told his disciples not to go out of the city until he would send the Holy Spirit. He went with them to Bethany. He raised his hands blessed them and ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of God. The disciples went to Jerusalem where they praised God and waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

FORM THREE WORK

Introduction to the concept of Bible

The Bible as the inspired word of God (Biblical or scriptural inspiration)

Biblical Inspiration refers to the spiritual influence of the Holy Spirit that came upon the writers of the sacred scripture enabling them to record God's message with complete accuracy¹². In the phenomenon of inspiration, two agents are involved, God and man. Both are the authors of the Bible but God is the primary principle author and Man is only his instrument. In this sense, the words and deeds of God are accurately recorded.

In other words, different people who wrote these books of the Bible were guided by the Holy Spirit so that what they were writing be what God wanted to communicate to people. Inspiration signifies the divine origin of the Bible.

The books of the Bible are called 'sacred' because they are regarded as inspired by God and are not simply the product of ordinary human creativity and effort. Hence, the Bible is divinely inspired.

¹² Spiritual influence that allows a person to think, speak, or act in a way that transcends ordinary human abilities.

For the Bible to be as it is today, it went through the process of **canonization**. This is the process of collecting authoritative books. In other words it was process of collecting various books in use were recognized as inspired by God. This was done first at the council of Hippo in 393 AD. The council drew up the list or canon of the inspired books. The acknowledged books of the Bible were then, considered '**canonical**' because they are on the list or 'canon' and also that they were regarded as inspired.

Now to sum up, by saying that the **Bible is the inspired word of God**, we mean that *God was with the authors who wrote these books and also with those who selected these books to be in the Bible. It is in this sense that the Bible is also called sacred scripture (because God who is sacred and holy is the author)*.

Since the Bible is believed to be inspired by God, it has an authority equaled by no other written source. It has no error (complete infallibility) and it is absolute sufficiency. The understanding of the Bible as having authority is rooted in its inspired character.

NB: The great proof of inspiration of the Bible is thorough the prophecies. Prophecies were which were uttered came to be fulfilled several hundreds of years. For example, **Isaiah 7:14** predicts the birth of special child which we see fulfilled in **Matthew 1: 18—25**.

Uses of the Bible

The Bible is very important document and that it is used differently in different sectors of life. It is regarded as an authoritative and one of the oldest books in human existence. It has served its different purposes for many generations of mankind. Some of the uses of the Bible are as follows:

Worshipping. Worship is the showing of passionate religious devotion to one's God. Many denominations use the Bible during their worship of prayers. They use different passages and verses to emphasize different points on matters of morals or when emphasizing that God is supreme and we are his creatures. This is done through preaching and teaching. Included in worship are different acts such as spoken or unspoken prayers, silence, the assumption of particular postures, ritual acts and gestures.

Meditation. In meditation, individuals read the Bible and reflect deeply on the passage read. During meditation, one put aside the other things and focuses on God according to the scripture read. In some cases individuals withdraw from the community and go to a lonely or solitary area for mediation. For example, Michiru Hill in Blantyre and resurrection garden in Kenya. Others opt to climb mountains when. This way of meeting God is called solitude or quiet time.

Guidance and counseling. This refers to a process of assisting and giving advice to someone. During guidance and counseling, Biblical passages are read so that people can get advice on issues that affect their lives. The Bible is also used when comforting the sick. For example **Proverbs 20: 1** advise people on the danger of drinking too much alcohol.

During swearing. The Bible is also used by government during swearing in ceremonies. During court session the Bible is used as a way that people will not use false information regarding the case. Again, when one has been appointed to high office such as president the Bible is used to assure that these people will administer justice during their services.

Academics. The Bible is also used for academic purpose. It is studies in Bible Knowledge, Theology, and History.

Source of healing. Some sick people seek divine healing from their illnesses. Some believers believe in charismatic gifts to provide healing for diseases and deliverance from demoniac attack. The minister can use holy water.

Wedding ceremonies. When people are getting married, the Bible is used. The pastor or priest reads the scripture from the Bible that speaks about marriage and the passages that advise married couples and what God expects from them as married people (I Corinthians 7:1-15). Again, the Bible is used to bless them as they are starting their new life.

Other uses include:

Funeral rites. When someone has died, the relatives are heartbroken and they lose hope especially when the deceased was a bread winner. During the ceremony, the pastor or the priest uses the Biblical passages to comfort and instill hope to the relatives and friends of the deceased.

Singing. There are some books that are used as songs. Many people have composed songs using the Bible. For example, the book of Psalms is used to compose songs. Such songs can be used in churches or other theatres for entertainment.

GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

INTRODUCTION

The book of Isaiah has 66 chapters and is divided into *three parts*. This is so because the events in the whole book occurred in different periods covering over 200 years.

Chapters 1 - 39

Written by *1st Isaiah /Jerusalem Isaiah / Proto Isaiah/ pre-exilic Isaiah* around 765 - 680 B.C. This Isaiah lived and worked in Jerusalem. This was the time when Assyria under Tiglath Pileser III (also known as Pul) was a world power. The kings who ruled Judah during this time of Isaiah of Jerusalem were: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. The main message is "**Sin and disobedience to God lead to punishment**"

Chapters 40- 55

Written by *2nd or Deutero Isaiah, or exilic Isaiah (Isaiah of Babylon)*. He was active towards the end of the exile in Babylon around 538 B.C. when Babylon was a world power. This was also the time when Cyrus was expanding his Persian Empire. The main message of this Isaiah is "**hope.**"

NB: Jerusalem (Proto) Isaiah gathered a 'School' of disciples, who recalled his words, studied them, put them in writing or edited them. The 2nd Isaiah who was active in Babylon during the time of the exile probably came from this ' School' of tradition. After the return from exile, there arose another prophet, the 3rd **Isaiah** who prophesied in the tradition which was started **by 1st Isaiah**.

Chapters 56- 66

Written by *3rd Isaiah or Trito Isaiah, or post –exilic Isaiah*. He was active in Jerusalem (Judah) when the Jews had returned from exile in Babylon. This was the time when Persia, under Cyrus, was a world power. . The main message of this Isaiah is "**God's reassurance to fulfill his promises**". God promised to rebuild Jerusalem City and will fulfill His promise

Reasons that show that these three parts were written by different prophets

1. The vocabulary and the style are different
2. There are differences in ideas about God
3. Their messages apply to different times.

WHO WERE THE PROPHETS/PROPHETESS?

Meaning of the term prophet

The word prophet originated from a *Greek term ‘prophētēs (profetes),’* which means advocate (a person who speaks/supports in favour of someone). The *Hebrew word* for prophet is *navi*’, which means “to proclaim, mention, call, utter or summon.” *In this sense it refers to an inspired person who believes that he has been sent by his god with a message to tell the community. He is, in this sense, the mouthpiece of his god or the one who speaks on God’s behalf.* In a broader sense, the word prophet can refer to anybody who utters the will of a deity, often ascertained through visions, dreams, or the casting of lots.

A primary characteristic of prophetic self-consciousness is an awareness of a call, which is regarded as the prophet's legitimization. This call is viewed as ultimately coming from a deity and by means of a dream, a vision, an audition, or through the mediation of another prophet. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah's call was in the form of a vision, in which Yahweh (the God of Israel) told him that he had already been chosen to be a prophet before he was born (Jer. 1:5).

Prophets were often organized into **guilds¹³** in which they received their training. The guilds were led by a prophet master, and their members could be distinguished from other members of their society by their garb (such as a special mantle) or by physical marks or grooming (such as baldness, a mark on the forehead, or scars of self-laceration).

WHAT IS A PROPHECY OR AN ORACLE?

This is a proclamation /message made by a prophet on behalf of God to the concerned people often and usually introduced by a phrase; ‘*The Lord says*’ Or ‘*The Lord Spoke to me.*’ Or it ends with ...says the Lord. The process of giving the message to the concerned people is called **prophesying**.

What is a prophetic vision? - Something the prophet sees or hears his mind, vision, in a dream. This is the way in which God conveys a message to a prophet.

Types of prophecies or messages common in Old Testament

- **Message of challenge (Woe prophecy)** –this message came when people were doing evil. Therefore, it was there to announce evil, suffering, punishment. In other word it there to announce anything bad upon the people.
- **Message of comfort or encouragement (Weal Prophecy)** – such message came when people were doing the good things. Therefore it was a message that announces blessings, peace, prosperity, freedom /anything good to people.

NB: in the Bible, Abraham was the first person to be called a prophet (Genesis 20: 6-7)

The Old Testament also speaks about false prophets who encouraged people to sin (**Jeremiah 23:13-14**). In this sense, false prophets are those who deliberately provide wrong teachings and would want people to follow their wring teachings.

ROLES /DUTIES OF THE TRUE PROPHETS

- to speaking the words and will of God to people.* I.e. Jonah and Nahum spoke God’s will to the Assyrians and Obadiah declared the will of God to the people of Edom.
- to reveal the nature and attribute of God.*
- bringing back people to the obedience of God’s Laws.*

¹³ association of persons who have similar interests in a craft, business, or profession; the purpose of the association is mutual aid and protection.

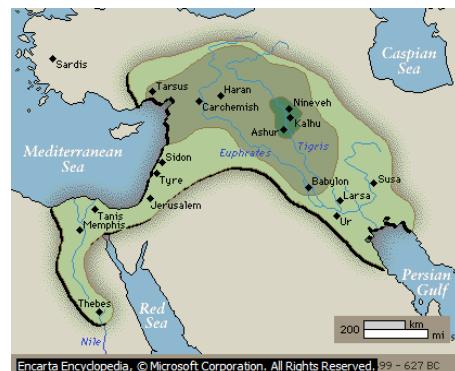
- to observe the social, political and religious situations and say what God thinks about them.
- they foretell God's future events (Isaiah foretold the birth of Jesus 9:6/ 7:14). Jeremiah also foretold the returning of the exile back to Judah.
- foretelling what God would do.
- Guiding the leadership of the nations.i.e In ancient Israel, prophets had a proper office in the governance of the king. They were there to counsel and provide guidance to the king. For example, King Jehoshaphat consulted the will of God from prophet Micaiah (Kings 22:1-28)
- Rebuking people and announcing the judgment of God. i.e prophet Nathan rebuked King David for committing adultery with Bathsheba the wife of Uriah.

Religious leaders that have taken the role of the ancient prophets

-Reverends/bishops/pastors/evangelists/apostles/preachers

Historical back-ground during the time of Isaiah

During this time, Assyria was a super-power and this country desired to conquer countries that were between Assyria and Egypt (middle-east countries), including Judah¹⁴. Assyria wanted to control trade route, wanted to control Egypt and Mediterranean Sea cost, hence, accumulating wealth. Assyria was a super power for almost 100



hundred years¹⁵. The king who made Assyria to rise as a super power was **Tiglath Pileser III (Pul)** (reigned from 745 BC-727 BC).

The Map above shows the plan of Assyria towards the Middle East countries.

Many countries tried to form **alliances** in attempt to block the plan of Assyria i.e. stopping her from expansion. During this time Judah under Uzziah was rich country and it felt safe and secure because of her wealth. However, this wealth made her people to be sinners: *drunkenness was common, moral corruption, oppression of poor was the order of the day. In short there was what is called, 'social evils'*. Isaiah saw that the real threat of Judah was not Assyria but the sins of the people and their lack of trust in God. These social evils, led to loss of political power in Judah, because the people began to worship idols, belief in superstitious practices such as temple prostitution, mountain sacrifices accompanied by dances, sacrifice of human children. In 735 BC, when Ahaz became king, idolatry was promoted.

NB: kings of Assyria during Isaiah's time:

Tiglath- Pileser III (Pul) -- Shamanaser V---Sargon II---Sennacherib.

FIRST OR PROTO OR JERUSALEM ISAIAH OR PRE-EXILIC ISAIAH

The Isaiah Tradition

What is known about Jerusalem Isaiah? /facts about Jerusalem Isaiah/who was Isaiah?

- Was the son of **Amoz**, meaning, His father was **Amoz**.
- He lived in Jerusalem (Judah) between 765 and 680 B.C.
- He was a city man, well educated and informed of the political situation (he was a statesman).
- He had access to the king and was politically active.
- He became a prophet after seeing a vision in a temple in 742 BC, that is, in the year that King Uzziah died. By then, he was 20 years old.
- Was a married man and had **two sons** which had symbolic names:
 - **Shear Jashub** –‘a few will come back’/ ‘the remnants shall return,’
 - **Maher-shalah hash baz** - ‘Quick - Loot - Fast Plunder’ /(the sword that hastens)
- his prophetic career lasted for about 40 years through the reigns of **Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah** and **Manasseh**.

NB: the reigns of these four kings of Judah covered more or less than hundred years (from 788 - 687 B.C.)

NB: *Jerusalem Isaiah died as a martyr during the reign of Manasseh.*

MEANINGS OF THE NAMES FOUND IN FIRST ISAIAH

- “**Isaiah**” means “God is salvation”. It has the same meaning as Joshua or Jesus. It is particularly suited to such a person who practiced strong faith in God.
- “**Uzziah**” means “My strength is in God” (788 - 742 B.C.)
- “**Jotham**” means “God is perfect”. He was made regent king in 750 B.C. and ruled only for five years.
- “**Ahaz**” means “God grasps my hand” (735 -716 B.C.)
- “**Hezekiah**” means “God is my strength” (716 - 687 B.C.)

ISAIAH'S VISION AND CALL (6:1 - 13)

- The vision took place in the temple of Jerusalem in 742 BC when King Uzziah died. This time there was either an occasion of the feast celebrating God's kingship or when people were enthroning King Jotham.
- Isaiah saw God seated on his throne high up and round him flaming creatures each with six wings, God's robe that filled the whole temple; Smoke that filled the temple (smoke-symbolizes the presence of God)
- The creatures hid their faces.
- They were calling to each other ‘holy, holy, holy! The Lord Almighty is holy. His glory fills the world.’ (This short song reflects the *name, nature and the power of God*.)
- The temple shook at their sound.
- The temple was filled with **smoke** symbolizing God's presence.

NB: The sins of Isaiah were forgiven with the touching of lips with a burning coal. In the Bible, fire is often a sign of purification. In the presence of God's holiness, purity, greatness and perfection, Isaiah realizes that he is only a sinner as well as the people with whom he lives. The thoughts of the heart only come out through the mouth that's if the heart is sinful, so shall the lips.

-Isaiah, then, volunteered to be a prophet after hearing God asking, “**Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?**”

What message did God send Isaiah to tell the people of Judah?

- no matter how much you listen, you will not understand.
- no matter how much you look, you will not know what is happening
- make the minds of these people dull, their ears deaf, and their eyes blind.

- so that they cannot see or hear or understand
- If they did, they might turn to me and be healed.

NB: in summary Isaiah was ordered:

- i. To make the minds of the people dull
- ii. To make the eyes of the people blind
- iii. To make people's ears' deaf

For how long will the message be delivered?

- i. Until the cities are ruined and empty
- ii. Until the houses are inhabited
- iii. Until the land is a desolate

What was the actual meaning of the message?

- God does not harden the hearts of his people.
- they refuse themselves to listen.
- so the meaning is: *go on hearing and seeing without understanding because you don't want to.*

Why the death of Uzziah was a crisis to Judah?

- because it was believed that the blessings of God came to people through the king.
- Jotham (Uzziah's son) was a weak king.
- it was a time when danger loomed from Assyria (from the East) i.e. Tiglath Pileser was planning to attack Judah.

Themes from the vision of Isaiah (these themes run throughout the whole Book of Isaiah.)

1. God is holy

- God is not like man, but totally different from man.
- God is not part of his creation; he is separate.
- God is holy, "holy, holy! holy! The Lord Almighty is holy"
- Men have no right to question God.
- Men must not try to control God; through magic, child sacrifices etc.
- There is no fault in God; no trace of evil.

2. Sinfulness and repentance

Because God is Holy, in his presence, man realizes his Sinfulness and one repents. i.e. Isaiah reacted "there is no hope for me, I doomed, I am a man of unclean lips, I live among a people whose every word is sinful" (Isaiah 6:5). Similarly, Peter reacted before Jesus "Go away from me Lord for I am a sinful man" (LK 5:8)

3. God Controls History/he is king

- He is the Lord Of history
- It is He and not the rulers who control history.
- The grief over the death of Uzziah should not be exaggerated as if the fate of the people depended on him rather than in God.
- Even gentile kings are in the service of God who rules supreme.
- Usually God used gentile kings to punish his people but he used Cyrus to save them. Therefore, God can use anything to achieve his purpose.

4. The Remnant and hope

Disasters which befell Judah were not hopeless leading to ruin and doom. They were not meant to destroy the nation but to purify it so that God's people should be granted better times.

After the destruction, God will make sure that there are survivors of famine, wars and exile, who would carry out his plan of universal salvation. The phrase, '***The remaining people in the city will be like a 'stump' of an oak tree that has been cut down.***' The ***stump*** symbolizes the destruction but also hope for the survival of some of the

people of Judah (remnant), since, '*From the remnant will come the Messiah,*' **the anointed one** to lead the people in the ways of God.

Why was there always hope for the people of Judah after destruction?

-through the spared Jews God would fulfill the promise that Abraham would be a blessing to many nations.

-through the spared Jews God would fulfill the promise that David's dynasty would last for ever

NB: Throughout the Bible after disasters and punishment there is usually hope at the end i.e .Adam and Eve, the flood during the time of Noah.

5. Judgment/punishment

God punishes people because of their sins using Two ways:

Through natural calamity such as drought.

Through political instability such as wars.

NB: The judgment will come until the cities are empty. **Isaiah asks the Lord, 'How long will it be like this Lord?'**

God answered:

-*Until the cities are ruined and empty.*

-*until the houses are inhabited.*

-*until the land is a desolate waste*

-*I will send the people far away and make the whole land desolate.*

-*even if one person out of ten will remain in the land, he too will be destroyed...*

6. The glorious of God

-Glory is for God, man should not think he is greatest

-His robe and the smoke fill the temple just like the cloud fills the world.

-His glory is seen when suffering and oppression cease/end.

Chapter 1

SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL SINS OF ISRAEL

Rebellious Israel: the sins of the people of Judah and Jerusalem (1:2 - 6)

Sin is trespass or disobeying God's will or law.

This verse is the beginning of an oracle, a divine message. God *calls the sky and the earth* (God's angels in heaven and all inhabitants of the earth) **Why?**

1) As **witnesses** to this charge, So the heavens and the earth are his witness to *God's complaints*

2) **The oracle is very serious.**

"**Children**" - these are the people of Israel, God had so tenderly and patiently reared (brought up) to become his people. But they have repaid all his care by breaking off relationship with him. "**Rebelled**" means, ingratitude, unfaithfulness, sins etc. He says *animals like cattle and donkeys are much better than Israelites* because these animals know their master but the Israelites have forgotten God, do not understand God. "**You are covered with wounds from head to foot,**" The whole nation was full of sinners, from the king (the head) to the least (the **foot**). This means there was total decay in every aspect of their life e.g. political, social, religious life.

In summary, God says Israel is a doomed nation, corrupt and evil because:

-**Their sins prevented them from doing God's will. These sins are:**

- Corruption
- Injustice
- Murder

- Oppression of the poor.

-**They have rejected God.**

-**They had turned their backs on him i.e. Stopped listening to him.**

-**They have rebelled against him.**

Pictures of Israel after punishment: Israel is abandoned/derelict (1: 7-9)

Jerusalem is described as:

-devastated country.

-A country with destroyed cities.

-A country taken over by foreigners and in ruins.

-A country with Jerusalem alone left under siege and God likened the city to a “*defenseless watchman’s hut in a vineyard or a shed in a cucumber field.*” This passage refers to the time when Sennacherib invaded Judah, during the time of Hezekiah, and took 46 cities and deported 200,000 Jews to his capital Nineveh. Only Jerusalem was still free but defenseless. (It was weak and not safe as a watchman’s hut /defenseless). This happened when Hezekiah rebelled against Sennacherib in 701 BC.

Condemnation of religious hypocrisy (1:10-17)

Worship in Judah during religious ceremonies

-They purified themselves through ritual washing and ablution

-They bought ritually clean animals for sacrifices

-They said prayers with hands with hands stretched out and palms up

-They burnt incense as a symbol of their prayers going up to God

-They sung psalms and hymns with instruments like lyres, harps and drums.

In this passage, Jerusalem is compared to **Sodom** and **Gomorrah** because her sins are likened to the sins of rulers and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. This reminds us of complete sinfulness.

(VI1) **God attacks the religious hypocrisy of the Jews** whose sins and refusal to repent render their sacrifices unacceptable to God. Lavish sacrifices without righteous conduct cannot please God. God is fed up with the purely external worship, prayers and sacrifices of people *who are unjust* in their daily life.

Their religion was hypocritical and empty because:

1) *They exploited the poor, orphan and widows, who are God’s favourites.*

2) *They continued to sin against God, yet they pretend to worship God.* Their religion did not express the deep interior of faith.

Three religious ceremonies condemned by God are:

1. (VI3) "**New moon**"¹⁶ - a day of rest at the beginning of each month when the Jews were told to have a holy convocation and offer sacrifices (Numbers 28:11 - 15). It was held on the first day of the new moon.

2. "**Sabbath**"¹⁷; the seventh day of the week in the **Hebrew** calendar is the day of rest and prayers (Exodus 20:8 - 10).

3. "**Annual religious gatherings** “- great feast days e.g. Jewish New Year; Day of Atonement, and the feast of Tabernacles and pass-over.

Reasons why the Jews offered sacrifices to God

- For adoration (paying homage to God)
- Expiation of offences (reconciliation)

¹⁶ Jews visited the Temple of Jerusalem for a special sacrifice, held a family celebration, and generally abstained from business and work.

¹⁷ Day of holiness and rest observed by Jews from sunset on Friday to nightfall of the following day.

- iii. For thanksgiving
- iv. For petitions to be received

NB: God hates all these and will not listen to their prayers **God asked them to do the following:**

- wash themselves clean (*change their hearts*)
- stop doing evil of injustice, and oppression of the poor.
- help those who are oppressed such as widows, the strangers.

The sinful city: Lament over Jerusalem city (1:21 - 23)

(Jesus also lamented over Jerusalem-LK 13:34-35). This was so because Jerusalem was once a faithful city but now it is not. Isaiah describes the sinfulness of the city in **three pictures**.

A whore - many prophets describe the relationship between God and his people as that of a man and his wife (**Israel** is taken as a *wife* and **God** as a *husband*). So **harlotry** means infidelity; the unfaithfulness of the wife who sins with other men and becomes a prostitute. Jerusalem's infidelity is her sins of injustice, dishonesty towards God; again, she has rebelled against God. Israel was once filled with righteous people, but now, only murderers remain.

Impure silver (V22) - Jerusalem's former purity, faithfulness, obedience and justice (as pure silver which had great value) are now mixed with all sorts of sins, especially the sins of injustice of the leaders, hence, worthless (dross), useless

Wine mixed with water (V22) –at first it was like pure wine with value but now it has been mixed with water , hence, less value since, it is not pure wine.

The leaders had become rebelled and companions of thieves instead of justice and righteousness, there was injustice and unrighteousness.

Isaiah mentions the crimes against the leaders of Jerusalem.

- Righteousness is replaced by murder.
- The rulers are thieves; they accept bribes and gifts.
- The helpless orphans and widows don't get a fair hearing in court.

Judgment over the city (1:24 - 28)

Jerusalem will be purified by suffering through war. The result of this suffering is that:

- Good leaders will be put in charge (leaders who will be just and righteous).*
- the upright will be separated from the wicked (those who will repent will feel sorry for worshipping idols).*
- The wicked will be destroyed (rebels and sinners)*

CHAPTER 3

ISAIAH 3: 1-26, 4:1

POOR LEADERSHIP: CHAOS AND EVIL IN JERUSALEM (3:1-12)

Isaiah describes the coming chaos. It is the end of law, order, decent and responsible leadership.

To punish the people, God takes away things & people on whom they depend.

1. **Staple food**-food, water
2. **Various types of leaders** (these will be killed in war)
 - heroes and soldiers (military leaders)*
 - civilian leaders, statesmen, politicians*
 - judges and prophets (for law and order)*
 - everyone who uses magic*

3. Material things- veils, hats, rings they wear on their fingers, noses, fine robes, gowns, linen handkerchiefs, scarves

NB: The presence of pagan practitioners among the Jews is evidence that the people had forsaken God and lack of faith is replaced by superstition fostered by diviners, fortune-tellers and magicians.

Results of taking away all the leaders

- There would be breakdown of law and order, anarchy and chaos.*
- everyone would take advantage of the other.*
- people will run away from responsibility/leadership. Why?* Because they know that in that state of confusion, they will fail and be blamed, hence, all refuse responsibility even those that are well dressed and look presentable.
- immature boys will be leaders.* Society deprived of true leaders; will be ruled by ambitious and inexperienced people. "Boys" might be a reference to King Ahaz who was only 20 years when he began to rule (2 Kings 16:2).
- *The Assyrians will come and ruin the country.*

What would happen to the following groups of people?

The righteous

- they would be happy
- they would be enjoying what they had worked for

Evil people

- they were doomed.
- what they had done to others would now be done to them.

THE FINE LADIES OF JERUSALEM (3:16 - 4: 1)

The rich, idle and immodest women of Jerusalem living in and for luxury are also guilty along with their husbands, the national leaders. These women played a part in the injustices that were happening. Instead of correcting the situation, they were busy with their outward appearances.

The women are accused of: -

- Being pride/show off which made them despise the poor. (Concurring with their husbands to rob the poor).
- Arrogance i.e. holding their heads high with their noses in the air.
- They seduced men /tempting men through glancing wantonly, hence, flirting.
- Excessive love of luxuries at the expense of the poor.

Their punishments:

- All what they are proud of will be taken away. I.e. Loss of ornaments
- They will be disgraced and humbled. I.e. Baldness, Shame (through raping), Bad smell (from their bodies), Loss of freedom
- Having no husbands (since, their husbands would have died in the war), hence, they will suffer the disgrace of being childless and being widows.

NB: this will make 7 women get hold of one man.

Why is it good to punish evil doers?

- it cancels the wrong done
- it reforms the wrong doer for the good of the society
- it deters other people from doing wrong
- it eliminates the wrong doer in case of capital punishment

Sins highlighted in chapters 3-4:1

The people openly insult God
 The money lenders oppress the people
 Money lenders cheat people.

Chapter 5**The parable (song) of the vineyard (5:1 - 7)**

A **parable** can be defined as:

1. A story taken from everyday life that teaches one a spiritual lesson or a moral truth.
2. An earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

In other words a **parable** is a fictitious story, usually taken from daily life of people, yet unrecognized, dealing with things people knows very well.

Usually, a parable has one teaching or theme or lesson.

Why Isaiah used parables when putting across his message?

- to avoid debate.
- to make the lesson interesting.
- to draw people's attention.
- for people to remember easily.

Isaiah sang this song in the hearing of the Jews on their way to the temple for the feast of **harvest - thanksgiving**.

In this song Isaiah reminds the Jews that God chose them out of all the nations on earth:

What did the farmer do when caring his garden?

- he had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.
- he dug the soil and cleared it of stones.
- he planted the finest vines.
- he built a tower to guard them against animals and thieves.
- he dug a pit for treading the grapes.
- he waited for the grapes to ripen but every grape was sour.

What would the farmer do to the vineyard for its bad results or bad yield?

- he will take away the hedge around it.
- he will break the wall that protects it.
- he will let wild animals eat it and trample it down.
- we will let it be overgrown with weeds.
- he will not prune the vines or hoes the ground but he will let briars and thorns cover it.
- he would forbid the clouds to let rainfall on it (there would be drought).

Allegorical meanings of the terms used in a parable

1. **Friend of Isaiah** refers to **God** (who is the farmer). God cared for the Jews:

How did God show this love to the people of Judah?

- He chose them out of all nations on earth so that they should be light to all nations (making the name of the Lord known).
- he freed them from Egyptian slavery.
- gave them the fertile land of Canaan: the land of 'milk and honey'.
- he gave them law and the prophets to guide them. (She had the leaders needed in times of crisis (Joseph, Moses, Joshua, the judges, Kings, prophets etc.)

NB: Having invested a lot of time, money and care in the vineyard, the owner expected to harvest fine grapes which would produce good wine. And yet in spite of all these, Israel was *disobedient* and *unfaithful* to the covenant with God (produced sour grapes).

Privileges that Jews enjoyed for being the chosen people of God

- i. The knowledge of God
- ii. The knowledge that God the creator loved them as father loves his children
- iii. The knowledge of the Law which was the way of life chosen by God for His people
- iv. The choice of Israel to teach other nations the truth about God and salvation.

2. Vineyard refers to Israel

3. Vines refers to people of Israel

What is Yahweh going to do as a punishment to his people for their disobedience?

- God will allow the nations to invade and destroy the land of His chosen people; hence they will suffer through loss of independence and the exile. (His protection will be removed).
- the land will turn into a bush.
- there will be drought (God will not allow rainfall to fall on it).

THE MESSIAH AND NEW JERUSALEM

JERUSALEM IN DAYS TO COME: Jerusalem will become the centre of peace of the whole world (2:1 - 4)

The word Messiah means comes from a Hebrew word and it means 'anointed one.' The Jews were waiting for the messiah who will rescue them from political oppression of the colonial masters of other powerful kingdoms. This passage expresses a Messianic hope which concerns the New Jerusalem, when the city will become the city of God for people of all nations. At first, the worship of God was limited to the Israelites, but later, it will be extended to all nations and God would be the judge for all and there will be peace.

Three predictions about the mountain where the temple stand

- it will be the highest one of all.
- it will be towering over all hills.
- many nations will come streaming to it.

Why streaming to Mt. Zion?

- to be taught what God wants them to do.
- to learn to walk in the path that God had chosen.
- to accept Yahweh the God of Israel as the only God. (the worship of Yahweh was for the Jews only, but this time, it will be extended to all people)

Results of learning the ways of God (Yahweh)

- wars will cease and nations will live in peace.
- weapons of wars will be changed into agricultural instruments; hence; nations will never prepare for battle again.

NB: because of this restoration, the land will produce good crops, it will be protected and it will be a safe place.

CHAPTER 9:2 – 7

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

Perhaps Isaiah sang this song in the temple on the occasion of enthronement of the future king. i.e. Hezekiah (716 B.C.) It was for this reason that the prince of peace was later referred to as a **future, ideal king to come**.

The **two tribes, Zebulun and Naphtali** (were in darkness) will benefit or will see light during the reign of this 'prince of peace,' because

- The prince will break the rod that burdened them and beat their shoulders.
- He would defeat the nations that oppressed them.

Two groups of people, the **poor** and **helpless** will benefit due to his justice

Characteristics of this future king

- One of David's descendants.
- inspired by the spirit of God.
- wise, just and knowledgeable.
- One who will bring universal peace.

Titles or other names of the child who was about to born

- "Wonderful Counselor" Someone who is capable of providing good advice (one having supernatural wisdom).
- "Eternal Father" - a kind ruler who will care for and love his people as God does.
- "Prince of Peace"- under his kingship, there would be complete peace, harmony and general well being for all the people.
- Mighty God**- he will be like god hero, (having divine nature) a great warrior who cannot be defeated by his enemies.

Gifts of this ideal king

- wisdom and understanding*: he will be able to discern and understand the difference between truth and falsehood.
- counsel and might*: the ability to give wise advise and the power to do what is right.

CHAPTER 11:1 - 9

The peaceful kingdom: the just reign of a future and an ideal king

This passage describes the peaceful Kingdom whose king will come from the dynasty of David. This will be the time when the community of Israel will be a new community which is referred to as to the

'*New branches sprouting from a stump.*' Since the time of David, the Jews have waiting for an ideal king who would deliver them from their enemies, creates borders and bring peace and prosperity. This future king would be called the **messiah** (in Hebrew) OR **Christ** (in Greek) =anointed. The "**branch**" that will grow from that "**stump**" is the ideal king, the Messiah the loyal line of David is compared to a tree that has been cut down to mean that:

- A new king will come/ rise from David's descendants.
- A new king will have a humble beginning.

How would the new king judge and rule his people?

- he would not judge by appearance or hearsay.
- he would defend the rights of the helpless

This messiah would have charismatic gifts (gifts of the Holy Spirit) which show the power of God acting in man. These **gifts or his characteristics** include:

- Wisdom and understanding**-the king will have the ability to know and understand the difference between truth and falsehood. He will judge people not by appearances or position but he will see the truth and justice.
- Knowledge of the Lord**-the king will know the will of the Lord will obey him. He will do what is right before the Lord.

Proper judgment- the king will not favour anyone. He will provide judgment accordingly. He will defend the poor people.

Justice and integrity- the rule of the king will be characterized by righteousness and faithfulness.

-**Peace**-During his reign, there would be peace among the people.

Description of the peace and harmony that would be established

-**peace and harmony among animals**: wolves and sheep would live together in peace, leopards will lie down with young goats, lions will eat straw as cattle do.

-**peace and harmony between people and animals**: little children would take care of them; a baby will not be harmed if it plays near a poisonous snake.

-**Peace among people**-this peace will start in Judah and will spread to the whole world. This will happen because the king will help people to know the will of the God and people will be obeying the Commandments of God.

NB: this messianic expectation grew strong during the time of Jesus, however, many Jews, refused to accept Jesus since Jesus was a suffering messiah not a glorious messiah.

CHAPTER 7 **KING AHAZ AND PROPHET ISAIAH**

THE SYRO- EPHRAIMITE CRISIS: YAHWEH SENDS ISAIAH TO AHAZ :A WARNING TO AHAZ (7:1 - 9)

"When King Ahaz...ruled Judah, war broke out..."

Events that led to the outbreak of the war

1. By 745BC, Tiglath- Pileser III (Pul), of Assyria wanted to conquer Egypt and the coastal areas of the Mediterranean Sea, so as to gain control of the trade route to Egypt.
2. The way to Egypt led through Syria, Israel and Judah and 46 cities of Judah were in danger.
3. King of Syria, **Rezin** and of Israel, **Pekah** made an alliance and asked King of Judah, Ahaz to join them so that they broke the plan of Assyria.
4. Ahaz refused. This provoked Syria and Israel to attack Judah. Their plan was to replace Ahaz with a foreigner (the son of a certain Tabeel)

NB: The purpose/aims of Rezin and Pekah were:

- to attack on Jerusalem
- to force Ahaz to join them resist the Assyrians
- to depose Ahaz and replace him with a son of a certain Tabeel (V5 - 6).

Reaction of Ahaz and his people to the impending war

- he and all people were terrified.
- they trembled like trees shaking in the wind.
- Terrified, Ahaz decided to ask Assyrians to help him. (II kings 16:7-8)
- he burned his son as a sacrifice.
- he went to inspect the water supply of Jerusalem in preparation of the impeding siege.

Why Ahaz made an alliance with Assyria?

- he lacked faith, he trusted men not God.
- he was afraid of the combined force of Israel and Syria.
- he thought that Assyria would protect him.
- he believed that Assyria did not intend to attack Judah as it was somehow outside the route to Egypt.

NB: in general, he thought that by keeping away from the revolt or alliance, he would escape Assyrian attack.

The Lord sends Isaiah with his son (his companion) whose name was "shear-Jashub" to meet Ahaz (7:3-9)

Three people (Isaiah, shear-Jashub, and Ahaz) met on the '**road where the cloth makers work at the end of the ditch that brings water from the upper pool**'. Isaiah told Ahaz the following message:

- keep alert.
- Stay calm.

-do not be frightened or disturbed. Rezin and Pekah are not dangerous. Their anger is no more than smoke from **two smoldering sticks** (this means they were weak and soon would be defeated by Assyria) **NB:** Sticks of firewood are not dangerous anymore. They are a sign of a fire that is about to be "defeated by Assyria" (fall of Damascus in 732 B.C. and Samaria in 722 B.C.)

-have trust in God

How did Isaiah try to warn Ahaz?

The warning was in the name, 'Shear- Jashub'. **Shear Jashub means** 'a few will return': these are the people who survived the destruction/ those who returned from exile. This means, there would be destruction in Judah if Ahaz will not listen to Isaiah and many would die in a battle and that only a few would come back/survive or the remnant shall return. 'That is why Isaiah said that, *'if your faith is not enduring, you will not endure'* (7:9b).

The first sign: THE SIGN OF IMMANUEL (7:10 - 17)

-**A sign** it is something representing or indicating a reality OR it is an event through which man is assured of God's intervention OR it is a supernatural manifestation confirming the truth of prophecy.

God told Ahaz to ask for a sign from God himself. *'The sign should come from anywhere. It can be from deep in the world of the dead or from high up in heaven'*.

-Ahaz pretended **not to put the Lord to the test** and so he refused to ask for a sign, because he had already made up his mind to make an alliance with Assyria

-Ahaz then was given a sign by God himself. This sign was a child, **Immanuel**, who would be born to a young woman of marriageable age. (Isaiah 7:14).

Who is Emmanuel?

-A son to be born to King Ahaz. This was the future **Hezekiah**.

-the future king through whom God would make his promises come true; the **Messiah** (The Prince of Peace').

-The first Christians (the Jews) identified Immanuel with **Jesus** because: (*Jesus was of the house of David and had himself declared that he was King.*)

Significance of the name Immanuel

-Its significance was that God would protect Judah from Syria and Israel (Since God is with them). Before the child could begin to distinguish right from wrong, the threat of Syria and Israel would have been weakened.

NB: Ahaz did not accept his advice and could not be encouraged. He even refused a sign.

The second sign: Sign of Quick- Loot - Fast- Plunder - (8:1 - 4)

Isaiah then, gave Ahaz the second sign. God told Isaiah to write the word '**Quick loot fast plunder**', and two people acted as witnesses to the writing. These were **Uriah** (the priest) and **Zechariah** (Ahaz's father-in-law).

The significance of the name '*Quick- Loot - Fast- Plunder*' is that:

Syria and Israel would be destroyed by Assyria before this child is able to say 'mummy' and 'daddy' (before the child could start saying sensible things). This is the second son of Isaiah and the name conveys a message that the wealth of Damascus (Syria) and all the loot of Samaria (Israel) will be carried off by the King of Assyria. And Judah will be liberated from the war (or would be protected).

What message did God give Isaiah when his second son was born?

-to name his son **Quick- Loot - Fast- Plunder'**

-before the boy is old enough to say 'mummy' and 'daddy' all the wealth of Damascus and all the loot of Samaria would be carried off by the King of Assyria.

NB: The signs of *Immanuel* and *Quick- Loot - Fast- Plunder* were meant to persuade Ahaz to trust God and not fear human beings like Pekah or Resin who would be soon defeated. However, Ahaz because of his fear joined Assyria in seeking the protection, hence, deifying the advice of Isaiah

Isaiah's reaction or prophecies to Ahaz's unbelief or policies. (7:18-25)

1. Isaiah predicated disasters (**oracles**) which would fall upon Judah:

- I. The Lord will bring days of trouble through the King of Assyria
- II. The Lord will whistle for the Egyptians and Assyrians to cover the whole land.
- III. The Lord will hire a barber from across the Euphrates (Assyrian Emperor) and shave off beards and hairs of their head and bodies.
- IV. The land will be deserted.
- V. Wondrous life will come back.

-**Egypt** will come like flies on Judah.

-**Assyrians** will come like bees to Judah.

NB: Their armies will meet in Judah which will cause destruction and devastation.

2- By asking help from Tiglath Pileser, Ahaz '**hired**' a **barber** to defend himself and defeat his enemies.

Meaning, Assyria will demand much tribute from Ahaz and that Judah will be humiliated. Again, Ahaz and his people adopted many pagan customs contrary to God's will such as the worship of idols, divination, sorcery and magic.

3- The destruction of Judah would cause its destruction which will make the country to have plenty of pastures for the cows and this would cause the abundance of milk. For example a man will be kept alive with the milk of one cow and two goats only (Vv21-22).

4- The fertile land will be changed to a country where only hunters would come and cattle would graze. This will happen because the wars will make agricultural land not to be cultivated, hence, animals will be grazing and thorn bushes will grow freely again. This will later facilitate famine.

How were these prophecies fulfilled?

-Judah had to pay heavy tribute to Assyria, hence, she was humiliated.

-Israel was destroyed in two stages: in 734 BC and finally in 722 BC. Then, Syria was destroyed in 732 BC. This fulfilled the weakness of these two nations.

-Judah was at first destroyed in 701 BC by Sennacherib of Assyria.

-In 586 BC Judah and her capital city, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians.

Consequences of Ahaz's action (policy) to the land of Judah/why Isaiah was against Judah's alliance with Assyria

-Ahaz started trusting men not people: he forgot that God is in control of history.

-Judah lost its independence and became a vassal state of Assyria.

-idol worship from Assyria was introduced in Judah.

-Judah paid a heavy tribute to Assyria.

-Judah became more corrupt with Assyrian contact.

-Assyrian culture was introduced i.e. sacred prostitution and consulting fortune tellers.

- Judah became a battle field for Assyrians and Egyptians.

ISAIAH (8:16-22; 9: 1)

ISAIAH'S TEMPORAL WITHDRAWAL FROM PUBLIC MINISTRY

Isaiah withdrew from his public ministry because:

- his prophetic work could not be fruitful as the faithless king made it impossible for him to influence public affairs.*

- people of Judah did not take his words seriously.*

- He wanted God to act by fulfilling the prophecies he had made.*

- He wanted to pay more attention to his disciples and spend more time with them. This was the origin of the **Isaian Tradition** (or the **Isaian School of disciples**)*

Warning against consulting the dead

In this period of withdraw him told his disciples the following:

He told them to guard and preserve the message/prophecies that God had given him.

People would seek mediums which they have to discourage, since, mediums cannot keep trouble away.

In their trouble people would curse the king and God.

His two sons are living messages to the people of Jerusalem/living signs of his prophecies.

NB: Isaiah anticipated trouble during his absence. His absence will make people to pressurize his disciple to consult the dead. God continued to use Isaiah's children to remind Ahaz and the people of the message of God 8:18).

CHAPTER 36:1-22

ISAIAH AND KING HEZEKIAH

THE ASSYRIANS THREATEN JERUSALEM: SENNACHERIB SENT HIS CHIEF OFFICIAL TO HEZEKIAH

Introduction

In 715 BC, Hezekiah succeeded Ahaz as a king of Judah¹⁸. He was a son of Ahaz, and the 13th successor of David as king of Judah at Jerusalem. The dates of his reign are often given as about 715 to about 686 BC.

Hezekiah was a man of faith who embarked on reforming Judah such as:

- removing the altars to Assyrian Gods that Ahaz had put in the temple to please the Assyrian empire*

- he made Jerusalem the centre of worship again.*

- he stopped paying tribute to the Assyria.*

- He constructed a Siloam tunnel to be ready for siege by Assyrian army.*

NB: Because of his faith **Isaiah** came back to his public ministry.

Hezekiah reigned at a time when the Assyrian empire was consolidating its control of Palestine and Syria.

Political Situation continued.

- Sennacherib defeated Babylonia, Phoenicia, Philistia, and invaded Judah and destroyed 46 cities¹⁹. He then deported 200,000 Judeans.

- He withdrew when Hezekiah paid heavy tribute. This means Jerusalem was free but defenseless.

- After having defeated the Egyptian armies at Ekron, Sennacherib decided to occupy Jerusalem so he sent his official to accept the city's surrender.

- Sennacherib himself could not be present at the siege as he was held up at Lachish where he had to fight Tirhakah²⁰. Sennacherib also sent envoy (**Rabshakeh**) with a letter to Hezekiah. In it he was told to surrender.

¹⁹ This happened when Hezekiah had ruled for 14 years.

²⁰ King of Egypt.

Three Judeans came out to meet Rabshakeh: Eliakim, in charge of the palace; Shebna- the court secretary; Joah - in charge of the records.

ISAIAH 36:1-22

THE MESSAGE OF SENNACHERIB THROUGH RABSHEKEH: ASSYRIA DEMANDS THE SURRENDER OF JERUSALEM

The Assyrian official made **seven** points in his speech. Some are military (or political) arguments while others are religious arguments: **he wanted to undermine the people's confidence (he wanted to discourage further resistance).**

1. *You may be good at talking but you lack power- (Military)* –he pointed out that mere words cannot substitute military skill and power.
 2. *Your ally Egypt has been defeated so you cannot rely on that Power- (Military)*. –he indicated that to the people that they should not rely on Egypt because she is weak and cannot help them.
 3. *You cannot rely on your God either since your own king has done away with God, Your king/deceives you when he tells you to rely on your God - (Religious)*. He destroyed the confidence of the people in God by misrepresenting what Hezekiah had done in destroying all the places of heathen worship in Judah.
 4. *Your army is no match for our Assyrian army- (Military)*-he revealed his knowledge of the weakness of Judah's military by offering to provide 2000 more soldiers.
 5. *It is the Lord who sent us to destroy you- (religious)* – he told the people that the Lord is bringing judgment on Judah using the Assyrians as his instruments.
 6. *Our god showed that he is stronger than the gods of other nations because we defeated them. (Military and religious)*-he doubted if Yahweh can protect them from their enemies.
 7. *Trust King Sennacherib; he will treat you well in your own land and take you to a better land than your own. (Political)*- He promised them a land full of food, a land similar to theirs if they make peace with the Assyrian King.
- NB:** the **THREE** officials interrupted and demanded that Rabshakeh has to use official /diplomatic language of Aramaic not Hebrew language. But Rabshakeh refused.

Reasons why the officials of Hezekiah demanded official language?

- the issue was for diplomatic purpose than for public consumption.
- the threatening speech of Rabshakeh could have led the people to riot against the king to surrender.

Why Sennacherib wanted Judah to surrender without fighting?

- he was fighting many wars at once.
- he was afraid to attack Yahweh's chosen people and land.

Reaction of the people to Rabshekeh's speech

They kept quiet as Hezekiah had told them.

Reaction of Hezekiah's representatives

- they tore their clothes.
- they reported the message to Hezekiah.

Hezekiah's reaction to what the Rabshakeh said (37:1 - 4)

- He tore his clothes in grief.
- Put on sackcloth which symbolizes sadness.
- He went to the temple to pray and ask humbly for God's help.
- He sent Eliakim, Shebna and the senior priests to prophet Isaiah **for advice**.

NB: Hezekiah showed his change of mind and indicated his willingness to trust God and follow the advice of his prophet unlike Ahaz.

The message of Hezekiah to Isaiah (37:3-4)

- today is a day of suffering.
- we are being punished and are in disgrace.
- we are like a woman who is ready to give birth but is too weak to do so.
- Sennacherib has insulted Yahweh through his official.
- may your God hear these insults and punish those who spoke them.
- pray to God for survivors.

God's Response- (Isaiah's /God's answer and encouragement) (37:5- 7)

- do not let the Assyrians frighten you.
- the Lord will cause the emperor to hear a rumour that will make him go back to his own country.
- the Lord will have him killed there.

NB: indeed, Sennacherib heard the approach of the Egyptian army which was led by **King Tirhakah²¹** of Egypt. As a result, he could not attack Jerusalem soon. But he started to prepare to fight against Egypt. Sennacherib however, sent a threatening letter to Hezekiah.

ISAIAH 37:8 - 13

SENNACHERIB'S SECOND THREATENING MESSAGE: SENNACHERIB SENT A LETTER

Sennacherib **sent a letter** to King Hezekiah which was a repetition of some of the arguments in his official's speech (i.e.)

- your god cheats you when he says I will not defeat you.*
- you have heard what an Assyrian emperor does to any country he decides to destroy*
- From the past, Assyrians has been victorious over nations with their god (My ancestors have destroyed many cities while their gods were present).*
- therefore, Judah will not be exempted.*

NB: in summary, the letter stated that Judah should not be deceived for Yahweh would not protect them. The letter also stated that no god ever protected a city or nation that Assyria attacked.

NB: The Assyrian King is defying openly the one true God by comparing him to false gods of other nations.

Hezekiah's Reaction (37: 14-20)

- he read it.
- he went into the temple and Spread it before the Lord and
- prayed asking God to deliver Judah from the hands of Sennacherib and his army.

The prayer of Hezekiah (37:16-22)

- almighty Lord you alone, are God.*
- you are the creator and ruler of everything*
- listen to the insults from Sennacherib*
- we know he destroyed many nations and their false gods*
- rescue us from the Assyrians so that all nations should know that you alone are God.*

How Hezekiah's Faith is shown

- He prayed in the temple

²¹ Tirhakah succeeded his cousin Shebitku on the throne.

- He consulted Isaiah, ready to follow his advice (V21).
- He believed that God had heard the Assyrian message and would rebuke and punish Sennacherib. (V20).
- He asked Isaiah to pray to God for the people of Jerusalem.
- He was confident that God would not abandon the remnant who were faithful to him (V4)

God's reply /taunt song against Sennacherib (37:21 -35)

- Jerusalem laughs at you.
- You have been disrespectful to me the Holy God of Israel.
- You think you are a great performer but you just carry out what I, Yahweh, planned.
- You are in my control, and I know everything about you.
- I am in control, I will put a hook through your nose and bit in your mouth and will take you back by the road on which you came.

Isaiah's message to Hezekiah (v. 33 ff)

- for two years there will be famine but in the third year but in third year the land will produce food.
- through the remnant, God will fulfill his promise
- Assyria will not destroy Judah
- the king will hear a rumour that he is needed in his country
- he will be killed there

The end of the siege/How did God rescue Jerusalem from Assyria? (37:36-38)

- the angel of the Lord killed **185,000 soldiers** in the Assyrians camp.
- Sennacherib withdrew and returned to Nineveh after hearing the rumour that Egyptian army was near Nineveh.
- Two sons of Sennacherib, *Adrammelech* and *Sharezer* killed their father when he was worshipping his god Nisroch in the temple.
- another son, **Esarhaddon²²** succeeded him as a new king.

ISAIAH 38:1 - 8, 20 - 22

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS AND MIRACULOUS RECOVERY

Hezekiah fell sick and was almost dying. He suffered from a boil.

A. God's first Message to Hezekiah (38: 1)

- He was to put everything in order.
- Because he would not recover
- He should get ready to die.

Hezekiah's Reaction to the message (38:2 - 3)

- He turned his face to the wall and
- Prayed** to God
- he reminded God him of his *faithfulness* and *loyalty*, and *doing what God wanted*.
- He began to weep bitterly.

²² Esarhaddon is best known for his conquest of Egypt in 671 B.C. Although he was a younger son, Esarhaddon had already been proclaimed successor to the throne by his father, [Sennacherib](#), who had appointed him governor of Babylon some time after Sennacherib sacked that city in 689. Sennacherib was murdered (681) by one or more of Esarhaddon's brothers, apparently in an attempt to seize the throne

B. God's Second Message to Hezekiah (38:4 - 6)

- I have heard your prayer and seen your tears.
- I will heal you.
- I will let you live 15 years longer.
- I will rescue you and the city of Jerusalem from the emperor of Assyria.
- I will continue protecting the city for the sake of David my servant.

NB: As a sign that God would add 15 years to Hezekiah's life, God made the shadow on the stair way built by King Ahaz, go back ten steps.

NB: Hezekiah was healed by putting a **paste of figs** on the boils. When Hezekiah got healed, he sung praises to the Lord (Isaiah 38:9-18).

CHAPTER 39**BABYLONIAN MESSENGERS TO HEZEKIAH/ABASSADORS FROM BABYLON****(39:1 - 8)**

Soon after recovery, Hezekiah received visitors from Babylon. They were led by **Merodach Baladan**²³

Reasons why the visitors were sent to Judah:

1. The **apparent reason** was to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery and offer him a present.

2. The **real reasons:**

- **Wanted Hezekiah's help against Assyria.** (Forming an alliance against Assyria)
- **To spy on the land** of Judah for future attack.

-the visitors took the **letter** and a **gift**.

How did Hezekiah welcome the visitors/ envoys?

Hezekiah showed them all the wealth in his stores (silver, gold, spices, perfumes and military equipment.) Why did Hezekiah do this?

- He wanted to impress them so that he could get favorable terms for alliance (He thought if they saw how rich and powerful Judah was, the terms of the alliance would be more favorable for Judah.)
- He wanted to show them that he was an equal partner.
- He was flattered by the visitors from a powerful country.
- He was showing off.

Reasons why Hezekiah might have accepted the alliance against Assyria?

- I. He was flattered by the visit of a big country, Babylon
- II. A group of influential people in Jerusalem persuaded him to join the alliance
- III. There was hope that chances of success seemed good
- IV. He hated being subject to Assyria paying especially by paying tribute and by worshipping foreign gods.
- V. The army of Assyrians was weakened by Melodach-baladan.

Reaction of Isaiah/prediction of Isaiah to what Hezekiah did.

²³ King of Babylon who began to reign as king in 721 B.C. This was the time when *Sargon II* was king of Assyria. He rebelled against Assyria but was defeated and dethroned in 710 B.C. In 703, he came back to power and reigned again during Sennacherib's time, from 705 to 701 B.C. **NB:** Melodach Baladan used the chance to strengthen his power when Sargon II of Assyria died in 705 B.C. in 703 B.C he sent ambassadors to Hezekiah to get his support.

Isaiah told Hezekiah that Babylon was asking for Judah's help today but in near future it will be her enemy and conqueror. He told him that

- one day all the money, possessions and treasures of Judah will be sent to Babylon.
- Many Israelites, among them some of the King's descendants, will be taken away
- and some will be made eunuchs there to serve the King of Babylon.

NB: Upon hearing this terrible prophecy, Hezekiah said that the '**word of the Lord is good**' these words they *might mean that the prediction will not be realized during his life time*. Here Hezekiah did not care that his own children and their seeds would be exiled and suffer because of his mistake.

Reasons why Isaiah disapproved Hezekiah's action of forming alliance with Assyria

- it will show that Hezekiah lacks faith in God, the controller of history.
- the Jews would be exposed to idols
- some Jews would be taken into exile and some would be castrated and made their servants.

Summary of Hezekiah's life/ characters

- 1) He was a man of faith.
 -he purified the religion of Judah by removing pagan elements such as idols.
 -he introduced the Passover celebration which had stopped.
 -in his sickness, he turned to God.
 -he took advice of the prophet.
 -when threatened he could consult Isaiah and prayed to God to save him.
- 2) He was active in international politics.
 3. He was a man of enterprises (development) - he fortified Jerusalem and built the Siloam tunnel.
- 4) He was patriotic, meaning that he loved his country not to be ruled by Assyrians
- 5) Had some weaknesses i.e. he made an alliance with Egypt and Babylon against Assyria. Again, he showed his wealth to Babylon.

POLITICAL SITUATION THAT MADE JUDAH TO BE TAKEN TO EXILE

- Towards the end of the 8 Century B.C., Proto Isaiah had told Hezekiah, King of Judah, that one day the treasures and the people of his kingdom would be sent in exile (Babylon) (39: 6). This happened in 587 B.C.
- Hezekiah was succeeded by his son **Manasseh** who was very wicked. During his reign, there was a revival of pagan rites, including astral cults in the very forecourts of the temple of YHWH, child sacrifice, and temple prostitution; hence, he is usually portrayed as the wicked of the kings of Judah he also worshipped stars and did divination. He ruled Judah for 55 years (II Chronicles 33:1-9). During his reign Babylon rose up against Assyria. Manasseh was succeeded by his son **Amon**, who was also bad. This king was assassinated after ruling for 2 years. Amon was succeeded by **Josiah** (640–609).

Josiah became King at the age of 8 and ruled Judah for 31 years. Josiah was good king just like Hezekiah. According to God's plan, Assyrians were defeated in **612 B.C.** by the combined forces of the *Medes, Babylonians and Seythians* and the new Babylonian empire became a world power. When Josiah saw that Assyria was weakened he used this as an opportunity to make Judah independent and he purified the nation religion of Judaism.

Egypt which was always opposed Assyria now decided to join forces with this old enemy (Assyria) against Babylon but Josiah remained opposed to Assyria so he was on the side of Babylon against Egypt. Josiah was defeated and killed in a battle with the Egyptians in *609 BC by Necco II, the pharaoh of Egypt, at a place called Megiddo*. When

Josiah died Necco II, chose the son of Josiah, Jehoahaz (or Shallum). He was forced to take his side against Babylon. Necho took Jehoahaz to Egypt after seeing that he was not royal to Egypt. Necco II made **Jehoiakim** king of Judah. Jehoiakim reigned under the protection of Necho for some time and paid heavy tribute. In 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar II of Egypt defeated Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish. Jehoiakim changed his allegiance from the Egyptian king to Nebuchadrezzar. He remained loyal for three years and then revolted against Nebuchadrezzar. After several battles and invasions, Nebuchadnezzar led the decisive invasion against Judah and besieged Jerusalem. Jehoiakim died at this time.

-Jehoiakim was succeeded by his 18 year old son, **Jehoiachin**. He reigned three months. He was forced to surrender to Nebuchadnezzar II and was taken to Babylon (597 BC), along with 10,000 of his subjects. Many scholars cite **597 BC** as the date of the **first deportation**, for in that year King Jehoiachin was deposed and apparently sent into exile with his family, his court, and thousands of workers. Nebuchadnezzar chose **Zedekiah** (original name, *Mattaniah*) to succeed Jehoiachin.

Zedekiah was the third son of Josiah and the uncle of Jehoiachin. Zedekiah thus held his throne as a vassal under an oath of allegiance to Nebuchadrezzar. However, He foolishly conspired with Egypt against Babylon. To end any trouble in Jerusalem, in the ninth year of Zedekiah's rule, Babylonian army laid siege to Jerusalem. In the sixth month of the siege a breach was made in the city walls. The end came in **586 B.C** With the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the principal buildings, including the Temple and the fortifications: the walls and houses of Jerusalem were destroyed, its temple was sacked and burned. Zedekiah and his men fled by night toward the Jordan River, but they were soon captured. He and his leaders were taken before King Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, in Syria, where Zedekiah's sons were slain in his presence and he, a disloyal vassal, was blinded and carried in chains to Babylon, where he was imprisoned until his death and the people of Judah, except for the poorest of the land, were deported to Babylon. Judah lost its status as a kingdom and became a Babylonian province.

In Babylon, many Jews were scattered in small communities where they had to work for their masters. Most of them were ill-treated and were far from home. Most of them lost hope that they would ever go back to Jerusalem again. This great deportation of 586 B.C, which was to be a theme of lament and remembrance for millennia to come. Numerous Jews also migrated to Egypt during this troubled time. Some of the prophets who encouraged them that God was with them and that one day they will return to Judah were **Ezekiel**, and **second Isaiah**.

Reasons why god allowed the Jews to go to exile

- it was a punishment for their sins
- he wanted them to realize their sins and repent
- he wanted to purify them
- he was preparing them for the mission of bringing salvation to all nations

Main message of first Isaiah

- he rebuked sins
- he called the people to repent
- he predicated judgment on the people of God-Babylonian exile
- he gave the message of Hope-the remnant shall return

SECOND ISAIAH (DEUTERO OR EXILIC ISAIAH)

(Chapters 40-55)

Introduction

These chapters tell us about the life of the Jews in Babylon and how they suffered and how they were comforted. They were in Babylon as exiles for 70 years. The second Isaiah is also known as the '**prophet of comfort .WHY?**

Because:

1. *These chapters were written for the Jews in exile where they suffered:*

- deportation:** They suffered as they had been forcefully taken to foreign country.
- harsh treatment** (manual treatment): In the foreign country they were harshly treated
- They also suffered **spiritually. HOW?**
- They missed the temple²⁴
- They suffered seeing fellow Jews fall away from their faith
- Doubts and confusion caused them to be in suffering.

2. *God had given 2nd Isaiah the specific mission to comfort his people.(Isaiah 40:13)*

3. *Its main teaching is meant to comfort. How?*

Yahweh uses Cyrus to save His people.

Exile is punishment that will come to an end (40:2). It is shown in these chapters that the punishment of exile was a sign that Yahweh is concerned about his people.

Their suffering will lead to salvation of all nations.

NB: Parents punish their children to show that they care about them.

LIFE OF THE JEWS IN EXILE

Although the Jews suffered greatly and faced powerful cultural pressures in a foreign land, they maintained their national spirit and religious identity. Elders supervised the Jewish communities, and Ezekiel was one of several prophets who kept alive the hope of one day returning home. This was possibly also the period when synagogues were first established, for the Jews observed the Sabbath and religious holidays, practiced circumcision, and substituted prayers for former ritual sacrifices in the Temple.

In summary, the life of the Jews during the exile was not of hash as it had to be for example:

1. POLITICALLY

- Some were employed as Eunuchs at the king's palace.
- Some were employed as general workers at the king's palace. By doing so they had acquired vast experience about the type of government of the Babylonians
- They had also learnt how to conduct a population census.

2. ECONOMICALLY

- Some became traders
- Some learnt new professions of carpentry, brick and stone works
- They became very rich due the businesses they were doing.

3. SOCIALLY

²⁴ C.F Psalms 137

- They grouped themselves in settlements of their own under the elder.
- Some elite Jews became important leaders. For example, Daniel and his friends.
- The exiled King, Jehoiachin was still treated as the king of Judah (Jeremiah 52: 31-34)
- They learnt Aramaic language.
- They learnt how to eat and dress like them.

4. RELIGION

- The Old Testament books i.e. The Law and Prophets were compiled together and written
 - They observed the Sabbath.
 - They built small temples where they converged and worshipped the Lord on Sabbath. These small temples came to be known as **synagogues**.
 - They did circumcision.
- They had prophets to guide them.*

HOW THE JEWS KEPT THEIR FAITH (how the Jews were held together?)

1. They believed that their God was the only one God.
 2. They kept telling their traditional stories of Abraham, Moses the exodus king David and put them in writings. In Babylon they put the tradition in writing. Old writings were rearranged and edited. This acted as the birth of the book (Bible).
 3. They came together on the Sabbath: this was the origin of the **Synagogue** which means '*gathering together*'.
- Synagogues were used as a Sunday school during the week.
4. They set themselves apart from gentiles by following all rules based on the Law of Moses: Circumcision, keeping the Sabbath and abstaining from unclean food.
 5. They did not worship idols.
 6. They had prophets and priests among them: Among the prophets were **Ezekiel**, and **second Isaiah**. These prophets and priest helped to preserve faith by explaining the reason for the exile.i.e punishment for Israel's unfaithfulness and a way of preparing Israel for a new future.

Why the Jews doubt about Yahweh? : Faith in Danger (doubt that the Jews had about Exile)

The exile was a severe test for the Jews' faith in God and in his love and care for them. This was so because:

- The Jews believed that they were a people chosen and protected by God but it looked as if God had abandoned them.
- They believed that God had given them their country, Canaan; if this was true, how could he allow Babylon to conquer it.
- They believed God had chosen Jerusalem and its temple as his dwelling place; how then could he have allowed its destruction.
- They believed God was all powerful but it looked as if the gods of Babylon (Madurk) had greater power.
- They believed God was in control of events but it seemed that great world leaders like Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus decided the course of history.
- They believed God would fulfill his promises through a descendant of David. How could this be when the Jews were in foreign land?

What made Some Jews to be attracted to Babylonian religion/idol worship?

- Madurk, the Babylonian god, was seen while Yahweh was not seen/invisible, out of sight. Therefore, for human beings the worship of a physical god was easier than the worship of Yahweh which required concentration, discipline, self control, imagination & meditation.
- Worship of Yahweh was an everyday activity while worship of idols was occasional/ according to needs.
- Marduk proved his power over the gods of other nations through Babylonian victories. Again, Nebuchadnezzar ascribed his success to the god of Babylon, Marduk. Whereas, God seemed to take long to answer their problems.
- The Babylonian religious feasts and processions were impressive and joyous events, while the worship of Yahweh had a lot of restrictions. E.g. Ten Commandments
- Their temples and religious ceremonies were more impressive than what the Jews had seen in their temple at Jerusalem.

Words that Deutero Isaiah used in order to encourage his fellow Jews to Judah

- God would take care of them during the journey.
- The temple and Jerusalem would be rebuilt.
- Israel was the servant of Yahweh therefore they had to preach God to all nations.
- Their return would glorify YHWH as the God who cares for the oppressed.
- Their return was a 'yes' to God to a banquet (Isaiah 55: 1-9)

Reasons that God gives for Israel to return to him

- Israel is God's servant
- God is the one who saves
- He has swept away their sins
- He is the creator
- He will never forget them.

Words of hope

THE MESSAGE OF COMFORT: PROMISE OF THE RETURN (40:1-2)

The prophet gives Gods message the message of consolation, tenderness and love. Isaiah is consoling his fellow Jews in exile. The children of Lord have spent nearly 70 years in foreign land as slaves. Isaiah tells them that the time of hardship is over and that their deliverance is near. He says:

- You have suffered enough*
- your sins are forgiven*
- That they have been punished in full for their sins* (and that their punishment is over).

THE WAY TO BE PREPARED: preparation for the return (Isaiah 40:3-5)

- God talks of preparing the way for the joyful return of his people.
- The return was soon to those in exile and *no obstacles and no human opposition will stop Gods plan of salvation from taking place. How?*

The road will be prepared in the wilderness.

By filling valleys and leveling every mountain.

By making rough country smooth.

NB: the result of the safe and smooth return of the exiled will show and reveal the '**glory of God**'.

A voice cries out, 'proclaim a message....' (Isaiah 40:6-11)

Here the prophet compares between the briefness of mankind to grass that withers and the flower that fades to the eternal word of God. This comparison means that the hope that the prophet was bringing was from God who provides permanent and true things and not from man who brings temporary things. The fact that the message of hope is coming from God should bring more comfort to the people.

The proclaimed message is that:

- all human beings are like grass.*
- they last no longer than wild flowers.*
- grass withers and flowers fade when the Lord sends the wind over them.*
- people are no more enduring than grass.*
- grass withers and flowers fade.*
- but the word of God endures forever.*

NB: The significant of this message is that **man is weak** and does not last long, and that **salvation does not depend on man's effort but on God.**

Deutero Isaiah gives reasons for the exiles to repent

- Suffering is fruitless unless the exiles repent.
- Their past sins are forgiven.
- A servant should serve his master.
- God loves them and longs for their return.
- God made them for a special purpose.
- Only God can save them.

Good news which God sent to Jerusalem (40:9-11)

- tell the towns of Judah that their God is coming to rule with power, bringing with him people he has rescued.*
- he will take care of his flock like a shepherd.*
- he will gather the lambs together and carry them in his arms*
- he will gently lead their mothers.*

Qualities of God that He will displayed to the returning exiles.

A) Power to protect

- *bringing with him people he has rescued.*
- *gathering the lambs together and carry them in his arms.*

B) Gentleness

- *take care of his flock like a shepherd.*
- *lead their mothers gently.*

NB: during this time, the exiles had at this time heard that there would be a clash between the two giants, Persia and Babylon and were afraid of what will happen to them. The message shows that God is in control of nations like Persia and Babylon.

Greatness of God in contrast to man's weakness (Isaiah 40:12-17)

- He measures the ocean by handfuls.
- he measures the sky with his hands.
- He holds the soil of the earth in a cup.
- He weighs the mountains and hills on scales.

- No one can tell Him of what to do or advice Him.
- to God nations are like a drop of water
- and islands are like dust.
- all animals and trees in the forests of Lebanon are not enough to be used to offer sacrifice to God.

NB: *In other words, all the nations and the whole creation are less than nothing compared to the incomparable greatness, power, wisdom and majesty of God.*

CYRUS AS AN INSTRUMENT OF SALVATION

Isaiah (41:1-4)

Here God speaks and calls for all nations to discuss the present situation in which a powerful nation from the east (Cyrus of Persia) has risen and he triumphs with every nation he fights. God summons this meeting to discuss whether or not, God and He alone is the God of history and that He has given Cyrus all the victories and that these victories will continue to other nations.

Reaction of other nations to what Cyrus is doing

Isaiah 41:5-7

- They were afraid
- They trembled
- They sought refuge in idols with the aim of seeking deliverance from the hands of Cyrus (or against God).

God assures Israel for His protection and favour (41:8-10)

God now assures Israel for his protect and favour. He says:

- Israel is my servant, the descendants of Abraham, my friend.*
- I brought them from the ends of the earth.*
- I am your God, let nothing terrify you*

In summary God assures Israel that he is going to:

- help her
- save her
- make her strong

What would happen to the enemies of Israel according to this passage? (vv 11-12)

- those who were angry with Israel would know the shame of defeat
- those who fought against Israel would die and disappear from the earth.

God promises Israel that he will make her a threshing board with spikes that are new and sharp-(Isaiah 41: 13-20).

The results of this would be:

- she would thresh mountains and destroy them
- hills would crumble into dust
- she would be happy and praise God

MONOTHEISM VERSUS POLYTHEISM

God challenges the gods of other nations: The False idols on trial (41:21-29)

Here God is calling the gods of the nations to be examined and judged.

They are being:

- asked to show signs that they are alive either by speaking of the past or by telling what is to happen in future (predicting the future).
- Let them explain the whole course of history.
- And they have to do something good or bring some disaster. Obviously they cannot do any of these things because they don't even exist.

Arguments to prove that Yahweh is only God not idols

-He knows everything and his predictions about future events always come true.

-God understands and controls history (41: 25- 29,) **HOW?**

- He had chosen Cyrus from the East.
- To attack from the North.
- To trample on rulers as if they were mud.(though Cyrus is not aware of it that God is using him)

-he is the first, the last, the only God.

-he alone had predicated what happened.

-he alone created all things.

-no one helped him to create the earth.

-Idol worshippers are disgusting.

How does God guide the following groups of people?(44:24-26)

- **Fortune tellers**-he makes fool of them
- **Astrologers**-he frustrates their predictions
- **Wise men**- he shows that their wisdom is foolishness
- **His servant**-he makes his plan and predictions come true.

How did God attack idolatry? Idol worship is ridiculed (44:9-20)

Idolatry is worshipping of an image made by man (Exodus 32: 3-4/ Dt 18: 10-11). It can be physical idol or mental image.

God used **four augments to attack idol worship/why God says idol worship is useless:**

-*Idols are made by man; therefore, a god cannot be made by a man.*

-*The energy and skills of ironsmith and carpenter are all gifts from God. How can gifts of -God be turned into gods.*

-*the materials (iron and wood) they use are all creation of God.*

-*The wood and metal cannot make a god because they burn in fire.*

-*Idol worshippers will be humiliated.*

-*the makers and worshippers of idols are blind and ignorant.*

Modern day idols can be

-positions, wealth, celebrities, leaders, witchcraft,

Why these days people are afraid of abandoning idolatrous practices?

-they think they will be poor once the wealth is gone.

-they fear that they will lose their status in a community.

-they are afraid of losing life.

ISAIAH 44

THE CHOICE OF CYRUS AS YAHWEH'S INSTRUMENT

(Isaiah 44:24-28)/45:1-8

CYRUS OF PERSIA

Political and historical situation

The middle of the 6th Century witnessed the end of the domination of the great empires of Semite origin, especially the Assyrian and Babylonian empires. In 539 B.C. a ruler called **Cyrus** became a **king of the Persians**. Within 10 years, Cyrus had defeated the Medes. In 546 B.C. he captured Sardis, the capital city of Lydia and the capital city of Croesus. Finally, **in 539 B.C., the Persian king defeated Babylon** and became the world ruler when the Israelites had been in exile in Babylon for nearly 70 years. After putting an end to the power of Babylon, Cyrus decreed that all captive people should be allowed to return to their countries with their idols carried off by the Babylonians. As for the Jews, since they had no idols, they took the sacred vessels which had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezra 1: 1 - 4, 7-11). In the spring of 538 B.C., the first group of Jews returned to their ruined land, Judah.

The Call of Cyrus and his Mission: How did God bless Cyrus?-(45:1 -8)

- He opened the gates of the cities for him (the Lord is helping him to conquer many nations without any problem).
- he prepared a way for him.
- he leveled mountains and hills for him.
- he gave him treasures.
- He made him victorious by conquering other nations.
- he called him by name.

JEWS IN EXILE QUESTION GOD THE DECISION OF YAHWEH'S CHOICE (Isaiah 45:9-13)

-The exiled Jews found God's ways puzzling and they could hardly accept that God could choose a pagan as an instrument to deliver them from the Babylonians.

Why the Jews were surprised with the choice of Cyrus?

- Cyrus was a gentile and in Jewish views, a gentile, cannot be God's anointed.*
- In the past God used to choose one among them to lead. God chooses Moses and other influential leaders to lead Gods people.
- Cyrus was not part of God's chosen people, because he was not circumcised.*
- Cyrus did not know Yahweh.*
- Cyrus was an idol worshipper.*

How did God answer the Jews for the choice of Cyrus?

- Such question is not proper.** This is made clear by two comparisons.
- the clay pot and the potter.* A clay pot does not argue with its maker that a potter has no skill.
- the child and its parents.* The child cannot complain to its parents why it is made in the way it is. God is Holy totally from man and that His thoughts are not like man's thoughts. Therefore God is too great to be questioned. He is the creator of the whole world and all people are his and therefore He can use anyone to save His people.

Why did God choose a gentile as His instruments?

- He wanted to show that salvation is universal
- He wanted to portray that he is in control of history (events)
- He wanted to show that he is the God of all nations, therefore, He could use anybody He wanted.

THE TAUNT SONG AGAINST BABYLON: BABYLON'S PRIDE AND HUMILIATION (Isaiah 47:1-15)

YHWH used Babylon as rod to punish his people. However, YHWH turns against her and said that he would punish her.

This song reproaches proud Babylon in a humiliating way and it announces its downfall.

-**Babylon** is personified as a **young virgin**: The comparison implies youth and beauty.

-It also referred to the *world-ruler, independent, the proud conqueror, herself, unconquered*.

Accusations/ charges against Babylon/why God is to punish Babylon?

-She had over punished the people of God. (Babylonia, chosen by God to punish his people has gone too far in her treatment over God's chosen people)-**Psalms 137**.

-She has been cruel and merciless to the captive Israelite's, especially towards the old people.

-She was seeking the life of pleasure.

-Babylon also presumes foolishly that she was like God, everlasting. She boasted of her abilities and ascribed her success to her own prudence and wisdom. She forgot that Yahweh controls history and is the master who decides the fate of all nations.

-She was thinking to escape God's judgment through her magicians, fortune tellers and sorcerers.

Babylonia was very proud of her civilization in **culture, art, knowledge**. -These achievements blinded her to the truth that there is a great one, Yahweh Himself who will judge and punish her.

HOW WILL BABYLON BE JUDGED (OR PUNISHED) AND HUMILIATED?

1-She will cease to be a world-ruler: she will be defeated by Cyrus. ("Babylon come down from your throne and sit on the dust.")

2-She will suffer humiliation for losing her possessions. ("Lift your skirts to cross the stream...")

3-she will experience war that will cause the death of men and children.

4-The country will be devastated and ruined by Cyrus.

5-Her magicians, sorcerers etc. will be unable to help her from the punishment of God.

6-the country will lose sense of direction.

What the Babylonians depended on for their security

- i. Magicians
- ii. Strong army
- iii. Fortune tellers
- iv. Astrologers

How astrologers worked in Babylon?

- a. They studied stars
- b. They mapped out the zones
- c. They told from month to month what was going to happen.

THE SERVANT SONGS

The Second Isaiah is also famous because of **four songs** which are called the '**servant songs**'. In these four poems, the prophet talks about a certain '**servant of Yahweh**'

- who is the light of the nations
- The one who will be agent in bringing salvation, justice to all nations.
- The one who re-gathers the Jews as God's people
- The one who accepts death so that the sins of his people may be forgiven

EXAMPLES OF THE LORD'S SERVANT- WHO IS THE SERVANT?

A number of scholars identify the servant with the

1 - Remnants: i.e. the faithful Jews who survived wars and the exile. (These must bring back other Jews who have become unfaithful.)

2 - Israel as a community: Israel was chosen as the servant to be the light to all nations- “*Israel; you are my servant...*” (49:3), ‘*Listen, now, Israel my servant...*’(44:1).

3 -A person/individuals- i.e. Jesus himself, the **Messiah** or King **Cyrus**, Zerubabbel.

The First Servant Song (42:1 - 7)

In this song, Yahweh is speaking and He is introducing His servant.

His mission/theme - bringing about *justice*. The servant establishes this justice in silence, with patience and compassion.

His Characteristics/qualities (How was he prepared?)

- Was strengthened by Yahweh.
- was filled with the Holy Spirit
- was given power. (He has the power of God).
- Gentle,-courageous and perseverance.

His task/duties

- Bring about justice to every nation.
- bringing light to the nations
- opening the eyes of the blind.
- setting free those who sit in dark prison

The first servant song and Jesus Christ

- during Baptism (Matt 3:17) and transfiguration (Mk 9:7), a voice was heard, ‘*here is my own dear son whom I am well pleased*’.
- Jesus read a passage in the synagogue in Nazareth that the *Spirit of the Lord is upon Him*. (LK 4; 18ff).
- Simeon’s song in the temple said, ‘*Jesus is the light to the nations*’ (LK 2:29-32)

NB: in **Isaiah 42: 18-25**, Israel is called **deaf** and **blind** because **she failed to see that the exile was God's punishment**.

THE SECOND SERVANT SONG (49:1 - 6)

The speaker here is the servant himself.

His mission/theme-bringing back lost Jews to God (crypto Jews)

He tells the apostate Jews (the Jews in Babylon who had fallen away) and the gentiles that God gave him the task:
To bring back the scattered people of Israel.

His Characteristics/qualities

- He is able to express himself powerfully, since; he has been given authority to speak to all the people of the world.
- though in the past the servant failed but now he has the confidence in God that he will not fail this time.
- knows his aim in life that he has to restore the spiritual life of the Israelites.
- bringing salvation to everyone including the gentiles.
- he has been given the power of God through which people will glorify God.
- he is like a pillar of strength due to faith in God.

His task/duties

- bring back the scattered people of Israel.
- to be light to the nations.

HOW WAS HE PREPARED?

- his words were made as sharp as a sword.
- he was protected by God.
- he was sharpened like an arrow.

What is astonishing about this servant?

- he does not avoid suffering and shame.
- He realizes that God himself is his reward so that he can do without success
- he believes he can even save Babylon meaning that his mission is wider; salvation for all nations.

Reasons why the servant kept his faith in God despite his failure to accomplish his mission?

- a. He trusted God.
- b. He knew that God would defend his cause.
- c. He knew that he would be rewarded.

NB: **the second servant song and Jesus Christ**

- Jesus says he wishes to gather *his people* as a chicken gathers chicks (LK 13:34)
- Simeon says, '*Christ is the light to the nations*' (LK 2:32)

THE THIRD SERVANT SONG (50:4 - 9)

Here the servant speaks on his own behalf and on behalf of any true disciple.

His mission/theme is **suffering**. The sufferings of the servant are compared to those inflicted on a condemned criminal.

His Characteristics/qualities

- He is able to speak eloquently and encouragingly.
- he spends time with God to know to know His will every morning.
- he obeys the will of God even if God wills him to suffer.
- He is strong, resolute, determined and fearless in his work.
- he believes that God will defend him if put under the court of law.

His task/duty is to strengthen the weary.

HOW WAS HE PREPARED?

- he was given understanding so that he could not rebel.
- he was taught what to say. I.e. every morning he listens to God.
- God made him eager to hear what He is going to say.

The third servant song and Jesus Christ

- he dies a cruel death.
- he was buried with criminals.
- the servant was flogged on the back, so was Jesus. (LK 22: 63). Pilate said '*I will have him whipped*' (LK 23: 22).
- He was spat upon, so also was Jesus (MK 14:65).

But in spite of these sufferings, the servant keeps his faith in God. Why?

- God helps him, so he cannot be confounded.
- He will never be put to shame.
- The God who will justify him is near i.e. justification is at hand.
- If God declares him innocent, what value has the accusation of those who say he is guilty?

MAIN POINTS OF THE THIRD SONG.

- The main task of the disciple is suffering.
- Suffering makes one a good master.

- Such master is able to give courage to those who despair.
- To become such a master one has to listen to God
- Things are possible only if one has absolute trust in God.
- Those that put their trust in God have nothing to fear from enemies.

THE FOURTH SERVANT SONG/ MAN OF SORROWS/ THE SUFFERING SERVANT (52:13 - 53:12)

Here the speaker is Yahweh and the people

The fourth song describes the suffering servant. The people describe how the servant looks outwardly as having no beauty because of how people treated him. The servant is a man of sorrows. He suffered despised, rejected and disfigured. Worse still, he bears the iniquities of many people, then, he died a shameful, a bad reputation death. They buried him among the wicked people.

The Lord then, describes the successes of the servant:

- The servant will come back to life with glory.
- His suffering resulted into blessings for both the servant and people he suffered for.
- God would exalt him high.

His mission/theme - triumphant glory

His Characteristics/qualities

- he bears suffering without complaining or defending himself (he will endure the oppression and affliction).
- he will be bruised and wounded (Suffering puts its mark on him Hence, he did not look attractive).
- he will be despised and rejected by men
- he will surprise many people because of his work.
- he is honest, sincere and trustworthy.
- he will be exalted.
- he does not look attractive.
- affliction puts its stamp on him.

His task/duties

- to carry the sorrows and sins of others.
- to heal others by the sorrow inflicted on him.
- to make himself an offering for sin.

HOW THE SERVANT SUFFERED AND HUMILIATED

- ✓ He had no dignity or beauty
- ✓ He was wounded, bruised; flogged. He was beaten as a convicted criminal while the real criminals were the sinners for whom He suffered.
- ✓ He was despised and rejected.
- ✓ He was arrested and killed.
- ✓ He was buried with sinners.

NB: -This servant suffered as planned by God.

What is astonishing about the servant?

- Kings and nations are astonished because he appeared the lowliest of all, cursed by God.(53:3)
- He will be lifted up high, be satisfied and see the fruits of his life which seemed so useless.
- although innocent, servant does not complain or defend himself even when he is led to death.

The fourth servant song and Jesus Christ and reasons for the identification with Jesus**1-The birth of Jesus:**

During His birth Jesus was rejected-He was born in a manger.

His birth was first announced to the shepherds-useless among the groups

2-His mission was rejected:

He was rejected in His homeland in Nazareth.

Some chased Him and was against His ministry.

3-He was arrested as criminal:

During His arrest, He was arrested as a criminal.

They came with weapons just as Jesus was a very dangerous criminal

4-He was beaten and flogged of the back and spat on Him:

On His way go Golgotha; Jesus was spat on, beaten.

5-His trial was dealt with injustice:

The Sanhedrin brought Jesus to trial. They caught him without real charge against him. They found false accusation against him (Mk 14:57-59). Again, they accused him of political crimes as disturbing, claiming to be a king and encouraging the people not to pay tax to Caesar. Hence, he was judged based of false and un connected reasons.

6-His crucifixion-

He was crucified with the criminals: beside him were criminals.

7-Death of Jesus- on a cross, he was pierced with an arrow/spear**8-Burial and resurrection-Joseph of Arimathea buried him and after 3 days, he rose gain.****The teachings of this song were strange to the Jews. Because:**

-Suffering was a sign that the sufferer had sinned; hence, suffering was his punishment (John 9:1-2).

-Suffering could benefit only the sufferer himself (when it led him/her to repentance). It was of no use to others.

-Someone loved by God, certainly the Messiah, would not have to suffer.

-A dead person could not come back to life

GOD'S OFFER OF MERCY: FINAL INVITATION TO THE BANQUET OF THE LORD (THE POOR ARE INVITED)

"Come for all is ready..." (55:1 - 5)

The banquet is a free feast where free food and drink are provided /a gift which does not have to be earned.

The meaning of the banquet:

- It refers to God's care for people.
- It may also refer to the availability of the necessities of life such as food, drinks and shelter.

This is a joyous invitation addressed:

first to the *Jews exiled in Babylon* to accept the gifts of salvation offered to them by God.

Secondly the invitation is extended to the *gentiles* who will come to Jerusalem to learn from the Jews about the true God and his plan for them. God invites his people to repentance/spiritual food to all who want it: if they repent they will find life.

Verses 1-5 are an **OT** counterpart to the parable of the **Great Supper** in Luke 14:15-24. This is so because there is an appeal to the invited guests not to delay. God is ready to accept anyone who responds to His invitation no matter his or her condition or status. People should not hesitate to repent and turn to God.

What did God say to invite his people to his banquet?

-come everyone who is thirsty, here is water.

-come, you that have no money buy corn and eat.

-come buy wine and milk it will cost you nothing.

-why spend money on what does not satisfy.

The banquet is free but three conditions are needed:

-listening to God and acting on it.

-no hesitation

-repentance

NB "Water". Salvation is offered free - no one can buy it.

"Wine and Milk" - God gives generously.

"Who thirst"- the poor, those who long for God's salvation.

What reasons did God give for the invited to leave their wicked ways and change their way of thinking?

-he is merciful

-he is quick to forgive

How did God show himself to be different from man

-his thoughts are different from man's.

-his ways are different from man's.

-his ways and thoughts are as high as the heavens are above the earth.

What would happen to the people who listened and did what God had said

-they would enjoy the best food

-they would have life

-God would make a lasting covenant with them

MAIN MESSAGE IN SECOND ISAIAH

-Yahweh attacks idol worship

-a special servant-God has chosen a special servant to carry out his plan.

-calls for the return of the exiled Israelites.

THE THIRD OR TRITO/POST EXILIC ISAIAH

(Chapters 56-66)

This third part contains last prophecies uttered by the third prophet.

Introduction

Deutero Isaiah (40-55) had comforted his fellow exiled Jews by teaching them the meaning of suffering. God would use their pains, grieves and anxieties to achieve his purpose; the salvation of the gentiles. Their salvation was the glory of God's people.

The edict of Cyrus in 538 BC permitted the exiles to rebuild the Temple at state expense and to restore the sacred vessels plundered by Nebuchadnezzar. Just as the Jews were taken out of Judah in three waves of exiles (605, 597 and 586 BC) they returned in **three** successive stages. The leaders of this time were: Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Nehemiah and Ezra.

The first wave of returning was in 538 B.C and it was led by **Sheshbazzar** (probably the son of Jehoiachin). He was governor but responsible to Persian overlords of the land under two kings, Cyrus and Darius. A contingent of about 50,000 persons, including about 4,000 priests and 7,000 slaves, returned under Sheshbazzar, a prince of Judah. Sheshbazzar initiated the rebuilding of the altar for the sacrifices and the beginning of the foundation of temple but the progress was slow and finally stopped in 450 BC because of many factors such as money, divided opinions

and the hostility of the Samaritans which resulted to the time life enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans. However **Sheshbazzar** died or murdered by the Persians probably he was suspected of being politically dangerous. **Second Return under Zerubbabel** (Ezra 2:2; Haggai 1:1.), returned to Jerusalem in 522 B.C.. The temple was completed in 515 B.C. When Zerubbabel died, David's family ceased to rule in Judah. Internal Jewish affairs passed under the control of the high priest.

The next task was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, which was undertaken by **Nehemiah**, a Babylonian Jew and court butler who was appointed governor of Judah and arrived in 444. Nehemiah also began religious reforms, emphasizing tithing, observance of the Sabbath, and the prohibition against intermarriage with "foreign" women. This reform was carried through systematically and zealously by **Ezra**, a priest and scribe who came from Babylon about 400 BCE, called the people together, and read them the "book of the law of Moses" to bring them back to the strict and proper observance maintained in Babylon: circumcision, Sabbath observance, keeping the feasts, and, to seal it all, avoiding intermarriage.

Why some Jews were not willing to go back to Judah?

- it was a long and dangerous journey. (About 1,500 kilometers).
- most Jews had a comfortable life in Babylon and were not willing to leave their possessions.
- the future of Judah was uncertain, since, many years had passed.
- All the fortified cities had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar except Negeb (Samaria), so Judah was a small country indeed
- new generation of Jews was ignorant of Judah, hence, it was difficult to convince them.
- others got married there so there faith in Yahweh and in the temple was lost
- Alas, once the Jews had returned to Judah they had either forgotten this or failed to understand it.
- They paid more attention to the security of the nation and the purity of their religion **than** the patient bearing with sufferings.
- They built a wall around Jerusalem and guarded the holiness of the temple. They also built a wall around their communities separating themselves from the gentiles and anyone impure.

Reasons why Cyrus allowed all exiles in Babylon to return.

- He would keep his vast empire together only if he was a **friend**.
- He believed foreign gods would favour him if he advanced their worship.
- As a cunning politician, he encouraged religion as it often promotes peace, stability and submission.

TENSIONS, DOUBTS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

Life in Judah after the return was not as glorious and joyful as had been announced by Deutero Isaiah. The returned exiled Jews had **many troubling experiences**:

1. At first, the disappointed few Jews went back to Judah, followed later by only small groups. (In total only 50,000 Jews returned to Judah).
2. They found a poor country which was quite backward in comparison with the highly developed Babylonians they had left behind.
3. The new arrivals were shocked by the **injustices** and all kinds of **corruption** in their new country. It showed that the nation had deceitful and crooked leaders.
4. The tiny, weak country suffered from attacks by its neighbors.
5. There was tension between the new arrivals and the Jews who had stayed behind in Judah (the people of the land) and had mixed the Jewish faith with pagan religious practices. The returning Jews regarded themselves as

clean compared with those who did not go into exile. The tension between the two groups developed into oppression: the righteous became victims of the wicked.

6. There was hostility between Jews and Samaritans. At first Samaritans offered their help in the rebuilding of the temple, as they considered themselves to be Jews. But the returned exiled Jews refused the Samaritans' offer to help in rebuilding the temple. The Samaritans were considered as 'unclean' as their ancestors had married foreigners. The Samaritans became hostile to the Jews and the project of rebuilding the temple was delayed until 520 B.C. It was completed in 515 B.C. The hostility between Jews and Samaritans was due not only to religious differences, there was also political tension. The Samaritans claimed that the territory of Judah where the arrivals from Babylon had settled was their land. They were afraid that the temple would become a symbol of a new nation, most likely a hostile nation.

Guidelines to who could be admitted to the temple

The admission *gentile converts* and of *eunuchs* to the worship of God in the temple posed a problem for the redeemed community of Israel after the return from Babylon. At first before captivity, these groups of people were not allowed to worship the Lord (Dt 23:1-2). This was the time when the Israel as a nation was taken as the people of God. Those that were not Israelites by birth and those that had been castrated were not considered as the people of God.

Foreigners were rejected/despised because: they were

- regarded as '*unclean*', hence, any contact with them will lead to defilement.
- not circumcised
- Idol worshippers and therefore not fit to worship God with the Jews.

Eunuchs (People who had been castrated²⁵) were rejected/despised because: they were

- Unable to have children; they could not contribute to the increase of God's People.* Every Jew was supposed to have at least one child.
- They had mutilated their bodies*-The Jews had great respect for the body created by God. They had a great horror of anybody mutilation as showing contempt for the goodness of God's creation

The prophet's answer to the foreigners and Eunuchs:

Isaiah however, emphasized that the membership in the community of God depended on one's faith and on keeping of the covenant of the Lord by an individual whether a foreigner or not, castrated or not.

In short Isaiah said that both foreigners and Eunuchs have to do the following:

- They should love God and serve him.
- They should observe the Sabbath.
- They should faithfully keep his covenant
- They must do what pleases God i.e. they should do justice when dealing with fellow men.
- God will bring other people to join the Jews.
- my temple will be called a house of prayer for the people of all nations.(including the foreigners).

NB: if they keep all these, then, they will be accepted as God's people and can worship Him in the temple.

Reasons why some people these days are excluded from the congregations

- infidelity/-theft/-corruption/-pre-marital sex/-Beer-drinking/-smoking

²⁵or **neutering**. This is the removal of the [testes](#). The procedure stops most production of the hormone [testosterone](#). If done before [puberty](#), it prevents the development of functioning adult sex organs. Castration after sexual maturity makes the sex organs shrink and stop functioning, ending sperm formation and sexual interest and behaviour.

Condemnation of leadership: Bad or Corrupt Leadership denounced (56:9 – 12)

-There were a great number of Jews who did not go to Babylon and remained in Judah throughout the period of the exile so they had their own leaders. these leaders were like '**‘watchdogs’ that do not bark**', meaning that they failed to warn the people against their evil deeds. The people therefore, will be punished by foreign nations. **The leaders were accused of:**

-*Lacking understanding of expectation of their offices as a result they were being described as blind.*

-*Seeking for their own advantages*

-*Doing injustice*

These leaders were in two groups:

Civic leaders: political leaders, judges, social leaders

Religious leaders

In this passage God rebukes/denounces these leaders for different reasons:**A. Civic leaders:**

-*They were like greedy dogs because of their feeling of dissatisfaction (selfish leaders)*

-*Pleasing for themselves i.e. feasting every day, hence, excessive love of pleasure.*

-*they have no understanding*

B. Religious leaders

-*they are like watch dogs that do not bark*

-*they are blind*

-*They do not condemn evil/sin or warn people.*

-*they know nothing.*

-*they love to sleep.*

Punishment to both types of leaders and the people

- The leaders will be killed in war.
- The people will also be killed.
- The land will be deserted.

The Results of Bad/corrupt Leadership (57:1 – 13)

-Suffering and death of innocent people-The devout and faithful Jews are persecuted or ignored.

-corrupt religion.

-judgment and punishment.

God condemns evil and of idolatrous religious practices by his fellow Jews.**(57:1 – 13 /Isaiah 59:1-8)**

The negligence to warn people against their evil deeds by the spiritual leaders led them to worshipping idols. The idolatry practices include:

-*Worshipping fertility gods by having sex under the sacred trees in order to please certain gods.*

-*Offering children as sacrifices in the rocky caves to a god named Molech²⁶.*

²⁶ A deity to whom child sacrifices were made throughout the ancient Middle East. The laws given to Moses by God expressly forbade the Jews to do what was done in Egypt or in Canaan. “You shall not give any of your children to devote them by fire to Moloch, and so profane the name of your God” (Lev. 18:21).

- Pouring out Of wine and grain as offering.
- worshiping of smooth stones
- Having secret and unlawful practices in their own houses such as setting up idols and worshipping them,
- Animal sacrifices combined with sacred prostitution.

Why did the Jews turn to these evil practices?

- they were copying from foreign nations.
- they followed a syncretic life of other Jews and the Samaritans.
- they were led by evil leaders.

Why does God condemn these idolatrous practices?

- They forsook their living God, YHWH
- They told lies forsake

Groups of sinners that the people are compared with

- Prostitutes.
- Sorcerers.
- Adulterers

NB: Their punishment will be:

- foreign nations would come like wild animals and devour them.
- when they cried for help, God would refer them to their idols.
- their idols will not help them.
- their idols would be carried off by a puff of wind

ISAIAH 59:1-11

THE JEWS COMPLAIN

What were the complaints of the Jews?

- People thought that God was weak.
- People thought that God was blind.
- People thought that God was deaf to hear.
- People thought that God did not love them.
- they thought that the salvation promised by 2nd Isaiah was cancelled.

What did prophet answer them (God's answer)?

- God is not weak.
- God is not deaf.
- It is because of your sins that He cannot hear you.
- Your sins separate you from God.

The sins mentioned here include:

- Lying.
- Violence.
- Murder.
- Lack of justice in courts.

Ways that the people should take in order to be accepted by God.

- They must stop lying in court.
- They must stop being violent.

- They must stop hurting the innocents.
- They must stop murder.

ISAIAH 61:1-3

Isaiah introduces himself and announces the Good News of deliverance

What was the mission of the prophet?

- to announce the Good News to the poor.
- to heal the broken -hearted
- to announce the release of the captives and prisoners
- to proclaim that the time of salvation and defeat of enemies has come.
- to comfort all who mourn.
- to give to those who mourn in Zion joy, instead of grief.

How was the prophet prepared?

- God filled him with Holy Spirit
- The Lord chose him.

Isaiah 61: 5-9

Here the prophet announces the future glory of the people of God and their restoration/ promises God is making to Israel such as:

- they would be famous among nations.*
- Jerusalem will rejoice because of the actions of the Lord (their shame and disgrace would end)*
- The cities that had been in ruins will be rebuilt (they would live in their own land.)*
- *The foreigners will come to the people of God to do what? To save them. HOW?*
 - (-They will take care of their sheep)
 - (-They will work in their fields and vineyards.)
- while the Israelites will concentrate in serving the Lord faithfully by ministering to all people of the world, *they would be called priest of the Lord.*
- they will enjoy the wealth of other nations (People of other nations will know that the Lord had blessed his people.)
- their wealth will be doubled.
- God would make an everlasting covenant with them and would honour them.
- All the nations will praise the Lord for His action.

Main message of third Isaiah

- Universal salvation
- Conditions for the return of the exiles
- Message of restoration

GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospel of Luke

THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE ROMAN PERIOD: THE POLITICAL SITUATION DURING THE TIME OF JESUS.

Introduction to the New Testament

The New Testament starts with the birth of JESUS CHRIST. This period coincides with the Romans ruling Palestine²⁷. Rome must be considered one of the most successful imperial powers in history. In the course of centuries Rome grew from a small town on the Tiber River in central Italy into a vast empire. Unlike the **Greeks**, who excelled in intellectual and artistic endeavours, the Romans achieved greatness in **their military, political, and social institutions**.

The first empire of the Romans was **Julius Caesar**²⁸ who was assassinated and was replaced by **Octavian**²⁹. Octavian was given the title of **August Caesar** (*Caesar became the title for Roman emperors*). **August** means. '*Venerable or respected*'. The emperor Augustus reigned from 27 BC to AD 14 BC and ruled with absolute power. He reestablished political and social stability and launched two centuries of prosperity called the Roman Peace (*Pax Romana*). Under his rule the Roman state began its transformation into the greatest and most influential political institution in European history. People from the Roman provinces streamed to Rome, where they became soldiers, bureaucrats, senators, and even emperors. The death penalty for non Roman criminals was **crucifixion**. Rome developed into the social, economic, and cultural capital of the Mediterranean world. It was during the reign of **Octavian** that **Jesus Christ was born**.

The history of Jerusalem temple

First of all. the temple of Jerusalem, was the house of God and the centre of Jewish worship, the worship of YHWH. This temple passed through the following stages:

- The first temple was planned by King David and was built by his son Solomon in 900 BC. It took 7 years to be completed.
- It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC.
- In 538 BC, under King Cyrus of Persia and the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel, the construction of the temple began. But it was interrupted and finished between 520 and 515 BC.
- In 167 BC, the temple was desecrated by the great emperor Antiochus III.
- The temple worship was re-introduced by the Maccabee Freedom fighters in 165-162 BC.
- When Rome conquered Palestine, they put Herod the Great as the king of Jews. Herod began working on the temple and the main work was finished in 9 BC. (But the completion and decoration lasted until 64 BC.)
- In 70 AD the Roman destroyed it. Up to now. Only one wall remains. The whole site of the temple was occupied by the Mosque built by the Moslems in 7th Century AD.

WHO WERE THE JEWS?

²⁷ Roman Empire, political system established by Rome that lasted for nearly five centuries. . In 44 BC Gaius Julius Caesar, the Roman leader who ruled the Roman Republic as a dictator was assassinated. Historians usually date the beginning of the Roman Empire from 27 BC when the Roman Senate gave Gaius Octavius the name Augustus and he became the undisputed emperor after years of bitter civil war.

²⁸ The growing power of Julius Caesar, who assumed the title of dictator for life, threatened the prestige of many members of the Roman Senate. On March 15 in 44 BC a group of senators assassinated Caesar. His death emphasized the need for a new system of government that would help Rome to govern its farflung territories more effectively.

²⁹ Because Caesar had no male heirs, he stipulated in his will that his grandnephew, Octavius, whom he had adopted, become his successor. Octavius became Rome's first emperor under the name of **Augustus**.

Jews were a group of ethnic group having descended from a common history and a common language. The common language spoken by them in the 1st century AD, was Aramaic. The Jews accepted the Law of Moses as a way of life. They believed in YHAWH as their God. They attacked and observed the Sabbath, circumcision, ritual and cleanliness; hence, they regarded non Jews as sinners. They were not with the worship of Caesar and in joining military services.

DEFINITION OF THE WORD ‘GOSPEL’

The word gospel is derived from the Greek word ‘euangelion’, meaning “good news” or “good telling.”

In the New Testament, this word ‘euangelion’ is used to describe:

-*the announcement of shocking news by a messenger sent around towns and villages of an area.*

-*Message of salvation for the people.*

The Gospel is the announcement of the news announced by Jesus that the Kingdom of God has come, it is in our midst.

To the Jews who believed in Jesus, the Good News was that through Jesus, God fulfils the promise he had made to their ancestors, he is the messiah they had been waiting for.

For the gentiles the Good News is that they no longer live in darkness and without hope. The coming of Jesus they have known how to live a happy life and what to do with their life.

To both the Jews and gentiles the good news meant that the religious barriers which had separated them has ended and removed.

The four Gospels

In the Bible, four books bear the name ‘Gospel’. These books they all deal with the life of Jesus Christ, his birth, public ministry, death and resurrection. These four gospels portray Jesus as one who was sent from God, did miracles, and taught good ethics. But later, he was hated by Jewish religious leaders. He was crucified and after 3 days, he was raised from the tomb. All these books narrate these events in so similar way, despite that these four Gospels were written by four different authors. These gospels are **Mark, Matthew, Luke and John**. However, each of these four gospels presents the different types of writing about Jesus’ life. For example, Mark is concerned with what Jesus did focusing on his actions, miracles, death and resurrection. Matthew and Luke include more about what Jesus said, recording more of his preaching. John focuses on the identity of Jesus that is who Jesus was (the divine nature of Jesus). These different perspectives of the gospels provide the reader of the gospels with a wide range of reflection about Jesus and a comprehensive understanding of Jesus.

Authorship of the Gospels (who wrote these Gospels?)

- **The Gospel of Mark**

The earliest evidence pertinent to the authorship of Mark comes from Papias who was the church father in the third century. Papias said that Mark, being Peter’s interpreter, (and the cousin of Barnabas-Col. 4:10; Acts 15:37-39), wrote down accurately, but not in order that which he remembered of what was said and done by the Lord.’!” This Mark was a son of a certain Mary in whose house in Jerusalem the early community met for prayers (Acts 12:12). Mark is assumed to have grown up in Jerusalem and lived there during Jesus’ time but was not his follower. However, there is nowhere in the book where it is Cleary stated that John Mark is the author of the book.

- **The Gospel of Matthew**

Early Christian writers believed this book is and attributed to Saint Matthew, one of the 12 apostles (who at first was a tax collector). This is so because the author was supposed to be a Jew partly because the author was concerned with proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. Again, this Gospel contains numerous references to Jewish Scripture, law, and ways of life that presuppose the reader’s familiarity with Jewish life and partly because other evidence suggests that he wrote chiefly for Christians of Jewish origin before the destruction of the temple. Though it is like that the Gospel does not mention Matthew as its writer.

- **The Gospel of Luke**

Church tradition dating from the end of the 2nd century attributes this Gospel to “Luke, the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14), one of the “fellow workers” (Philemon 1:24) mentioned by Saint Paul. Most modern scholars accept Luke's authorship for both works of Acts of Apostles and Gospel of Luke.

• The Gospel of John

The authorship of the Gospel of John has generated heated controversy. Scholars attribute this Gospel to John the son of Zebedee. He was one of the three disciples whom Jesus loved along with Peter and James.

Similarities among the Gospels

- I. The gospels overlap in their content, wording. The most confusing being the first three Gospels (*Mt, Mk and Lk*).
- II. Items of similar content are placed together. For example, the three controversy saying, (forgiveness of sins, associating with sinners and fasting) Sabbath stories and parables.
- III. Synoptic sayings do not have long discussions but only short speeches and fragments of speeches.
- IV. The style and language used is similar in all the synoptic gospel. For example in the healing of a leper and in the eschatological conversation.
- V. About 95% of what Mark has is included in Matthew and Luke.

Differences among the gospels

1. Matthew and Luke have much more abundant material than Mark but in the way the activities of Jesus are represented, they all agree.
2. The first three gospels reflects a common view of Jesus as opposed to John, who write more independently and writes more of what Jesus was than what he did and said.
3. There are some events that are totally missing in some but are present in others. For example, the genealogy of Jesus which is found in Matthew and in Luke (though they are different) is absent in Mark.
4. Some events are presented in a different way. For example resurrection story in all synoptic gospels are different.

SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Since the 1780s, the **first three books of the New Testament** have been called the Synoptic Gospels. These are the Gospels of **Matthew, Mark, and Luke**. These three gospels resemble each other in their **wording, content and ordering of the events**. Because of this reason, these Three gospels are called '**synoptic gospels**' ('*seeing together*' or '*together sight*').

The word **synoptic** comes from '*synoptikos, “seen together”*': *syn* meaning "**together with**" and *optic* meaning "**seeing**"; therefore, it means "**seeing together**".

In summary, the word '**synoptic**' is applied to the Gospels of **Matthew, Mark, and Luke because they are so similar in language/wording, content, and the order (or sequence) in which events are recorded**. There are numerous theories concerning these similarities. The most common of these is that Matthew and Luke used the Gospel of Mark along with an unknown source (designated as "Q" by Bible scholars- from the German, *Quelle*, meaning 'source') to compile their Gospels. No one has an absolute answer to explain the similarities. However, it is possible that each of these Gospel writers shared information with the others, gleaned information from oral tradition or written fragments, or recorded eyewitness accounts. The fist gospel to be written was Mark (ca. 65 AD), then Luke (ca 75 AD), then Matthew (ca .85 AD), finally John (ca. (95 AD). The gospel of John is different from other gospels, since, 90 % of the material in the gospel of John are not found in the other gospels. And the arrangement of its material is different from the others gospels. For example, the cleansing of the temple comes early (John 2: 13-17) while the other gospels it is a climax of Jesus' ministry as he nears death.

What prompted or what happened fo these gospels to be written?

- As years went by, those who witnessed the life of Jesus and his resurrection were dying. So there was a need to put their witnesses into writing.

- The apostles would establish a church and then move on. The Christians left behind, they needed a reliable written records to preserve the apostolic teachings.
- Some preachers distorted the teachings of apostles, so writing protected the teachings against false teachings.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST LUKE

We are going to look the life of Jesus Christ basing ourselves on **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE**

Structure of the Book of St. Luke:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Lk 1:1-4 | - the prologue (introduction) |
| Lk 1: 5-2:52 | - the birth stories (of John the Baptist and Jesus) |
| Lk 3: 1-9:50 | - the Galilean ministries |
| Lk 9:51-18:14 | - the Judean ministry |
| Lk 18:15-24:53 | -the passion and the resurrection. |

Who was Luke?³⁰

Was a Syrian gentile and a physician from Antioch, who was later converted to Christianity. After his conversion, he travelled with Paul and got much information of Jesus Christ from Paul. This means he was not an eye witness of the ministry of Jesus, but he wrote the gospel depending on the eye witnesses. (II Timothy 4: 11). Luke was well educated, a great writer and had much knowledge on the OT traditions and Hellenistic teachings, Luke wrote two books:

-**The Gospel of Luke** –which was written either in Greece, Rome or Turkey.

-**Acts of Apostles**

The Gospel of Luke addresses to '**Theophilus**', which means, '*lover of God*' or '*friend of God*'. This '**theophilus**' can mean anyone interested in reading the Gospel or a '*Roman official of high rank*'. (Luke greets him your Excellency!)

Purpose of the Book of Luke/Why Luke wrote this book?

- to give an accurate and orderly account of the Good News.
- to show the unconverted Jews that Jesus was the fulfilment of God's promised Messiah.
- to show the unconverted readers the way to faith, especially that Jesus was the promised Messiah.
- to show that the Jesus was not a threat to the Roman Government.

Themes in the Gospel of Luke

1. **UNIVERSALISM**-The Gospel and salvation is for everyone, both Jews and gentiles, and all human race. Luke contains the great commission to preach the Good News to all nations. Passages to support universalism: '*Nunc Dimitis*'-(Simeon's prayer)-it says Jesus is a light to the gentiles.(LK 2:32) The history of Jesus dates back to Adam the father of the whole human race (LK 3: 23-38) During his departure- (Lk 24: 45-47)

2. **GOD LOVES EVERYONE WITHOUT DISTINCTION** (Jews, Samaritans, gentiles, women)-for example:
 - the Good Samaritan was praised in a parable (Luke 10:29-37)
 - Jesus rebuked James and John who wanted Samaritan Village to be destroyed by fire (Luke 9:51-56)
 - the parable of the prodigal son shows the love of God even to a sinner. (Luke 15:11-32)

³⁰ Luke served the Lord without a wife. He died at the age of 84 in Boetia (a district in Greece). He wrote this Gospel of Luke while in Achaia (Greece).

3. PRAYER-Luke portrays Jesus as a man of prayer i.e.

a) during the tough moments:

-in Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-44)

-on the cross (Luke 23: 34, 46)

b)-before carrying out a serious action:

-before choosing the 12 apostles (Luke 6:12)

-before teaching his disciples how to pray (Luke 11:1)

4. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

-Luke shows the work of the HS (and how Jesus was under the influence of the HS). Again, it shows how the Spirit is present in all events connected with the coming of and preaching of his message. For example:

a)-incarnation was possible due to Holy Spirit (Luke 1: 35)

b) -Simeon was informed by the HS that he would not die before seeing the Messiah (Luke 2: 25-27)

5. THE WORK OF ANGELS.

-They rejoiced over the repentant sinner (Luke 15:7)

-they celebrated over the birth of Jesus (Luke 2: 14)

6. MONEY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Luke portrays the importance of using money responsibly and the danger of putting all our hearts on money. i.e. the rich fool (Luke 12:21). Therefore, Detachment from wealth promotes relationship, especially between the poor and the rich.

CHAPTER 1

INFANCY NARRATIVES

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (VV1-25)

In Judea, there was a priestly family of **Zachariah** (from the priestly order of Abijah) and **Elizabeth**. Both were righteous (lived in obedience to God's word) but old and had no child. Childless among the Jews was considered as a misfortune or curse or punishment from the God. The word **Zechariah** means, '*Yahweh has remembered*' and **Elizabeth** means, '*God is fullness*'/'*God has sworn to protect*'. A priest who was to serve in the temple was identified by casting **lot**. When Zachariah was in the temple, an apparition of the angel Gabriel took place. The angel brought a message that he is going to have a son, John, means, '*God is gracious*'. John would be a Nazirite i.e. not to drink strong wine.

Gabriel said to Zachariah

-don't be afraid

-God has heard your prayer

-your wife will bear you a son

-you are to mention him John

-how glad and happy will you be

-he will be great man in the Lord's sight

-he must not drink wine or strong drink

-from his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

-he will bring many people of Israel to the Lord their God.

-he will go ahead of the Lord...like the prophet Elijah (he will prepare the way for the Lord)...

What Gabriel said to prove that the promise of the son would be fulfilled

- I am **Gabriel**
- I stand in the presence of God who sent me to tell you the Good News
- because of your unbelief you will be unable to speak, until the child will born.

Qualities of John the Baptist as said by Gabriel

- great man
- Nazirite
- filled with the Holy Spirit.

NB: Zechariah failed to bless the people because he was dumb. This made people to be convinced that he had seen the vision.

Reasons that made Luke put John the Baptist as a prophet of Old Testament:

- His birth was announced by an angel just like that of Isaac. Again, he was chosen before his birth and sent by God. The same was said to Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-5).
- John was born after continuous prayer of his parents just like that of Samuel's parents.
- He was born from a barren mother (and impotent father) just like Samuel, Isaac , Jacob and Samson.
- his parents were aged just like Sarah, Abraham, and Samson.
- his name was chosen and given by God through angel Gabriel.
- he was a Nazirite like Samson.
- he grew in strength blessed by God just like Samson.
- he was led by the Holy Spirit like Elijah.
- he **was like Elijah** in terms of *clothing, food and place of living* (desert).
- just like other prophets, his role was to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. John's mission like Isaiah is to prepare the Jews to repent and prepare them for the coming of Messiah.

Duties of john the Baptist

- Bringing back the Israelites to God.
- to come ahead of the Lord
- get the people ready for the Lord
- prepare the way for the Lord like Elijah
- He will bring fathers and children together again.
- He will turn disobedient people back to the way of thinking of the righteous.

NB: Zechariah became dumb because of his unbelief³¹ until John was born.³² When Zechariah began to speak, he sang a song of praise which is called '**Benedictus.**' This song is full of Old Testament phrase and this shows the Jewish heritage, Psalms, Genesis and Isaiah. In this song, Zechariah prophesied about John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.

³¹ Unbelief of Zachariah: 1-how shall I know this is so, 2-I am old together with my wife.

Angel Gabriel's answer I am **Gabriel**, I stand in the presence of God who sent me to speak to you and tell you this good news, but you have not believed my message, you will be unable to speak until my promise to you comes true.

³² Meaning that Zechariah was released of his dumbness after John's birth. Then Zechariah had a song called, '**Benedictus.**'

The Prophecy of Zechariah –Luke 1: 67-79

Zechariah prophesied that:

- God has come to help his people and set them free.
- Yahweh has provided a mighty saviour, a descendant of David...who was promised through his holy prophets to save the people from their enemies.
- God has shown us his mercy and has remembered his covenant with Abraham
- His son will be a great prophet of the Most High God.
- He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord
- He will tell the people that their sins will be forgiven because our God is merciful and tender.
- He will bring us salvation and peace will also reign among us.

The birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1:57-66)

When John was born people were surprised of the name John WHY?

- no one in the clan of Zechariah had that name of 'John.'
- they expected that the son will take the name of the father, Zechariah

The preaching of John the Baptist (LK 3:4-6)

The preaching of John was already prophesied by **Isaiah (40:3-5)**. Luke quoted Isaiah when introducing the ministry of John the Baptist. Isaiah said:

- someone is shouting in the desert*
- get the road ready for the Lord*
- make a straight path for the Lord to travel*
- every valley must be filled up*
- and rough paths made smooth*
- the whole human race will see God's salvation.*

The message of John to the following groups (Luke 3:120)

1. To ordinary people

- donate a shirt to those who don't have if you have two.
- share the food with your neighbor

2. Tax collectors

- do not collect more than what is legal

3. The soldiers

- do not take money from people by force
- do not accuse people falsely
- be satisfied with your pay.

4. The Jews. They were told that they should not think that just because they are the descendants of Abraham, they will be saved automatically. But they should repent and be faithful to God.

John emphasized that people should **repent**.

Meaning of repentance according to John.

- ✓ It means a total change of life, an interior renewal accompanied by sorrow for the past sins and a resolution to be faithful in future.
- ✓ It is a change in one's values and priorities.
- ✓ It is the turn away from sins and going back to God and his commandments.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS (LK 1: 26-38)

Galilee was lived by both Jews and gentiles. In this town, a virgin girl, **Mary** was betrothed to **Joseph** a descendant of David. The word **Joseph**, 'let him increase', while **Mary** (From Hebrew name '**Mariam'**) means '*beloved*' (Egyptian origin) or '*bitter tears*' (if in Hebrew). Mary was greeted with a special greeting fitting the important people like kings. Mary was to conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit. It was during the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary who was promised in marriage to Joseph, a descendant of David.

The angel's "greeting":

- peace be with you
- the Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you.
- do not be afraid
- God has been gracious to you
- you will give birth to a son
- you will name him Jesus
- he will be the son of the Most High God
- the Lord God will make him king as his ancestor David was
- he will be the king of the descendants of Jacob forever
- his kingdom will never end.

Mary's reaction:

She was deeply troubled by the angel's message. She wondered what his words meant and she said:

- I am a virgin'
- how then can this be?

The angel said

- The Holy Spirit will come on you
- God's power will rest upon you
- for this reason the child will be called the son of God
- as a sign, your relative Elizabeth is now six months pregnant even though she is very old.

Mary said

- I am the Lord's servant.
- be it done to me according to your will.

The role of Joseph

- he made Jesus to belong to a descendant of David.
- he provided the material support to the family.
- Mary would not be looked upon as a single mother.

Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth (LK 1: 39-45)

Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth for 3 months³³. When Elizabeth heard the greetings from Mary, the baby John, moved with gladness.

³³ But the degree of cousinship is not known.

Elizabeth gave the message to Mary that:

- She was the most blessed of all women
- That her child also was a blessed child

There Mary sung a '**magnificent**' which is a thanksgiving song. (LK 1:46-55). In this song Mary:

- Praised God because He has exalted her (God chose her to be the mother of a savior)
- That God has favored her
- She praised God for his mercy towards his people.
- That God has revived the covenant forever.

NB: The whole of the magnificent is the production of the **song of Hannah (1 Sam 2: 1-10)**. The other references in the OT which surely inspired, Mary's prayer are from Psalms and Isaiah. Some scholars attribute this song to Elizabeth because:

- Both Elizabeth and Hannah had been childless for a long time.
- And both Samuel and John were Nazirites.

CHAPTER 2**THE BITH OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE ROMAN CENSUS (-VV1-7)**

The census³⁴ took place during the reign of 'Gaius Octavius' (Augustus Caesar). The purpose of the census was:

- to know how many people are eligible for compulsory military services.
- to know those eligible to pay taxes.

Every head of a family had to go back to his home village for registration. Therefore, Joseph who was born in Bethlehem and also a descendant of David had to travel from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem,³⁵ a distance of 144 km from Nazareth to Bethlehem. This time Mary was approaching labor. All the rest houses/innings were full and Mary bore a son and was laid in a manger³⁶. He was named **Jesus**.³⁷

THE ANGELS AND THE SHERPHERD (2: 8-20)

- I am here with good news for you
- This will bring great joy to all the people.
- 'this very day in David's town'
- your saviour was born
- this is what will prove it to you: you will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger

NB: The shepherds were the first to get the news about the birth of Jesus.

The status of the shepherds among the Jews was low because: they were regarded as:

- Sinners** -because they were absent from the temple /synagogue services and they were ignorant of the law
- Outcast (unwanted)** -because they cannot give evidence in court.
- Defiled**- because they were not observing Jews regulations such as washing of hands just because they lacked time to observe the numerous Jewish religious rules and regulations.

-**They were suspected to be thieves/ untrustworthy.**

-**They were a lowly paid group of people.**

³⁴ The census took place every 14 years

³⁵ The birth place of David (1 Sam. 16:1ff)

³⁶ A cube used to feed cows.

³⁷ This means 'God saves'. Jesus was also Emmanuel-'God is with us', he was also Christ/Messiah-'anointed'

Why the birth of Jesus was first announced to the shepherds?

First of all the shepherds represent the believers who are humble enough, poor enough to recognize and accept the signs given by God.

-Jesus is the messiah for the despised and rejected people.

-shepherds have value in the eyes of God.

-Salvation is for the poor and the rich –everyone.

Titles of Jesus as mentioned by angels and their meanings:

Saviour

-He will save his people from sins

-He will be a light to the nations

-He will bring salvation to the whole

Christ

-Is the son of God

-Expected liberator

-Prince of peace

-Anointed/messiah

Lord-

-son of God

-king of Kings

Jewish birth ritual: the naming of Jesus (vv 21-24)

Circumcision- this is the operation of cutting away all or part of the foreskin (prepuce) of the penis. It was done 8 days after birth³⁸. On this day a male baby was both circumcised and named. It was a physical sign God gave Abraham as a part of a covenant with His people. It was a qualification for full membership in the people of God. Jesus was circumcised to show that he was a true Israelite

Naming the Child: a child was named on the occasion of circumcision the name given to the child described the person and his mission.

Purification³⁹- First of all giving birth made the mother ritually unclean. This uncleanness made her unfit to participate in public worship of God. After birth a woman was unclean for 7 days (if it is a male baby) or 14 days (if it is a female baby). Hence, she was unfit to participate in the public worship of God. Such a woman was to abstain from sexual intercourse for 33 days in the case of giving a birth to a boy and 66 days in case of a girl. To be clean/purified she had to offer a lamb and a pigeon or two pigeons for the poor.

Redemption-(representation)-according to the Exodus, every first born Son was deemed to belong to God. This ritual was happening 30 days after birth. This served to remind the Jews that God had saved the first born of Jews in Egypt. In this ritual, the parents symbolically ‘bought their son back’ from God. Therefore, parents had to pay 5 shekels (75 tambala) to the priest within 31 days after birth⁴⁰.

The meaning of Jesus' birth for Luke's various readers

- For the believing Jews- Jesus' birth fulfills the prophecies.

³⁸ Gen. 17:1-4;9-12 ,17:23-27,Lk 1:59

³⁹ Leviticus 12: 1-8

⁴⁰ Ex.13:1-2

- The gentiles without knowing it, Caesar and his officials are part of God's plan. As a result of their decree to hold the Census, Jesus is born as foretold by prophets, thus gentiles are also included in God's plan of salvation.
- To the unbelieving Jews, Jesus will be rejected as symbolized in the fact that there was no place in the inn.
- The outcast and the poor, Jesus is born in the fact place for them. The first invited people were the poor, shepherds.

Prophecy of Simeon and Anna (2: 25-40)

During time, of ***Redemption***-(the parents of Jesus met 2 people in the temple:

Simeon⁴¹: *good, God fearing man was waiting for Israel to be saved.* The Holy Spirit was with him. He was assured that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Promised Messiah.

Simeon said (Simeon's song Nunc Dimittis):

-Now Lord you have kept your promise
 -you may let your servant gain peace (die)
 -with my own eyes I have seen your salvation.
 -a light to reveal you will to the gentiles and bring glory to your People Israel.

Then he blessed the parents of Jesus and **Simeon told Mary that she will suffer because the son will be rejected (a sign that many will speak against), hated, tortured and crucified.**

Two occasions where Mary suffered /was sad

- when Jesus was tried by the Sanhedrin.
- when Jesus was being crucified.

Anna : a very old prophetess and widow /a daughter of Phanuel /of the tribe of Asher /had been married for only 7 years /was 84 years old /never left the temple /day and night she worshipped God /fasting and praying- *She thank God and spoke about universal salvation.*

How did the prophecy of Isaiah 7: 14⁴² was fulfilled through the virginal birth?

- i. He was born through the power of the Holy Spirit and not through biological means.
- ii. He was born through Mary who was a virgin and therefore knew no man.
- iii. He was a descendant of David through both his mother, Mary and father, Joseph.
- iv. Joseph was a descendant of the clan of David.
- v. Mary was a cousin to Elizabeth who was from the priestly family and that can make us conclude that Mary was also from the priestly family.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE (2: 41-51)

Passover feast⁴³ was cerebrated every year to remind the Jews on how they got out of slavery in Egypt. During the feast, the **activities done were:**

- i. killing of the lamb and roast it.
- ii. Eating the meat together with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.
- iii. Taking 4 cups of wine while singing.

⁴¹ which means 'God has heard'

⁴² For this reason the sovereign master himself will give you a confirming sign. Look, *this young woman is about to conceive and will give birth to a son. You, young woman, will name him Immanuel.*

⁴³ This was a holiday commemorating the Hebrews' liberation from slavery in Egypt and the "passing over" of the forces of destruction, or the sparing of the firstborn of the Israelites, when the Lord "smote the land of Egypt" on the eve of the Exodus. The festival thus marks the first and most momentous event in Jewish history.

v. Reading Exodus 12.

NB: Jewish boys officially reach adulthood when they had reached 13 years. During that age Jewish boys studies the Law and the tradition of the elders. Their knowledge was tested in a form of oral examination. Having passed the boy was:

- Entitled to take the reading of the law during the synagogue services.
- He was considered old enough to make decisions and responsibilities
- He was expected to observe the whole law.

It happened that during this time Jesus had reached 13 years.

How did child Jesus find himself in the temple?

- when the Passover was over, they started back home
- but the boy Jesus remained in Jerusalem
- the parents did not know this
- they thought that he was with the group
- they travelled the whole day and then started looking for Jesus among the relatives and friends
- on the third day they found him in the temple
- sitting with the Jewish leaders listening to them and asking questions...

Mary said to Jesus 'my son why you have done this to us'? The answer of Jesus indicated that the parents should not worry because he was doing what he came on earth.

CHAPTER 3:21-22

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

John the Baptist baptized Jesus in Jordan River. **Four things** happened when Jesus was being baptized:

- He was praying
- Heavens opened
- The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in a form of a dove.
- A voice from heaven was heard, '*You are my own dear son. I am well pleased with you'*

Why Jesus was baptized though he was not a sinner?

- he wanted to identify himself with the sinners
- to show that he has accepted his mission from God.
- to show that John was a true prophet.
- it was also the symbol of his death and resurrection

THE ANCESTORS OF JESUS (LK 3:23-28)

Genealogy means line of descendants (family tree). Luke gives a link of Jesus to Abraham the father of Jews. From this genealogy few things have to be noted:

Jesus was born to Joseph who belongs to the dynasty of David, hence, fulfilling the promise of God to David that an offshoot of his branch would rule for ever.

The genealogy emphasized the royal or kingly descent of Jesus.

Jesus is presented as a descendant of Abraham.

The genealogy shows that Jesus came from the people who were righteous in the eyes of God.

Jesus is the savior of all people.

CHAPTER 4

TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS CHRIST (VV 1-13)

These temptations were Messianic Temptations because all of them aim at drawing him away from his vocation as the Messiah and to fulfill the false Messianic expectation of the most Jews.

The desert is a place where one can meet God. It is also a place where demons and wild animals live. The temptations happened after Jesus fasted for 40 days.

Why Jesus went to the desert?

- He was led by the Holy Spirit
- To have time for meditation.
- To prepare for the mission i.e. to decide on how to establish the kingdom of God.
- To be tempted by the Devil i.e. to see if he is going to carry out his ministry in accordance with the will of God or through his own will. The temptations were THREE:

First temptation (4:3-4)-Jesus was told to show his son ship by turning stones into bread. The meaning was that Jesus should use his power to do miracles to provide physical needs (material things) for himself and the physiological needs of other people hence making himself popular. In other words the devils wanted Jesus to use his divine power to satisfy himself and people materially. Jesus answered that *humans cannot live on bread alone* (Dt.8:3). This answer showed that he had to put God first before anything else. (Jesus put God's will before his own).

Second temptation (vv 5-8)-Jesus was told that he will be rich if he worships Satan. The meaning was that Jesus should use his divine ship in terms of political power/worldly power. The hope that the many Jews had on Messiah one who will have political and military power over the Romans. Jesus answered that *God alone is to be worshipped and saved* (Dt.6:13). Jesus refused to link his son ship to the world or political power.

Third temptation (vv9-13)

Jesus was told to jump down because God would protect him (**Psalm. 91:9-12**). The meaning was that:

- Jesus should prove his divine son ship by unnecessary performance of miracles.*
- Jesus should form an army which would protect him as will be overthrowing the Romans.*

Jesus answered that *he should not put the Lord to the test* (Dt.6:16). His answer indicates that's he does not doubt the power of God but he should wait for the right time for him to start performing miracles.

NB: The temptations were in line with the expectations of the Jews on how the Messiah will do:

- The Messiah will provide the physical needs.*
- he will liberate them from the Romans and re-establish David's monarchy.*
- He will make Israel an independent nation.*

The ministry of Jesus Christ

JESUS BEGINS HIS MINISTRY IN SYNAGOGUE IN TOWN OF NAZARETH IN GALILEE (LK 4:16-30)

The name synagogue means '*gathering together*'. A synagogue was a prayer house where the Jews gathered to pray. It was composed of ten families. Synagogues were found in each and every town and village. No sacrifices were carried out in the synagogues .Scarifies was done in Jerusalem Temple. *It was also used as a Sunday school (school for the Torah).*

Order of the service in a synagogue during the time of Jesus

- worship and **prayers** (two prayers) and **shema**⁴⁴.
- readings** from the Torah and prophet.

⁴⁴ The prayer that says there is only One God and that the Israelites have to love their God with all their strength

-preaching and **teaching** by any male elder.

-**18 blessings** (by a priest)

Jesus is rejected as a prophet

NB: Jesus had this chance of preaching. He read **Isaiah 42: 1-2**. The passage was turned into his manifesto. He declares that his mission will be:

-*bringing good news to the poor.*

-*setting free those in captives.*

-*restoring sight of the blind.*

-*setting free the oppressed.*

-*announcing that the time has come when the Lord will save his people.*

Two kinds of reactions to this message:

a) First reaction

-they all looked (gazed) at him (4:20)

-all people were impressed at his words (4:22)

-they all marveled if he was indeed the son of a carpenter (4:22)

b) Second reaction

-the people were angered because Jesus praised the gentiles as being better than the Jews.⁴⁵ For example:

a)-he praised the widow of **Zarephath** for her kindness compared to Israelites in Elijah's time.

b)-Naaman was cured of leprosy by Elisha not those people from Israel.

Therefore, **the people**

-*became angry*

-*they dragged Jesus out of the town.*

-*they took him to the top of the hill.*

-*they wanted to throw Jesus off the cliff.*

-*but he walked through the middle of the crowd and went away.*

Why did they not believe in him?

-They expected God to send His message through someone not like Jesus who was the son of Mary and a son of a carpenter.

-The ideas of Jews of salvation were not in line with God's plan.

-they wanted to see miracles but were lacking faith and the right attitude towards Jesus.

-They were Jealousy

Miracles of Jesus

A **miracle** is an extra ordinary event that cannot be explained by ordinary natural power. It can also be defined as an activity that disrupts the natural law.

Reasons why Jesus performed miracles:

- To symbolize the triumph of God over the power of evil and that it was the end of Satan's power.
- To show that God cares those are suffering.
- To boost the faith of unbelievers.
- They were serving the purpose of setting the captives free

⁴⁵ The Jews believed to be God's people, hence, they despised the gentiles.

- They were fulfilling the prophecy of prophets.

These miracles included:

1. Healing miracles- done to sick people
2. Nature miracles (power over nature)-happened to reverse the law of nature. For example walking on the water
3. Raising from dead
4. Exorcism - done to expel/cast out demon(s) from someone

Healing miracles

1. Healing of Simon's mother in law and many people (LK 4: 38-41)

Jesus left the synagogue and went to the house of Simon and Andrew. He went with two disciples. They found Simon's mother in law sick with fever. Jesus healed her by commanding the fever to leave her hand up. The fever left her and she served them. After sunset, the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon possessed to be healed. The demons were ordered not to speak because they recognized him as the Messiah, since, most of them were shouting, '*you are the son of God.*'

2 .Healing of a leper (5. 12-16)

A leper was a social outcast⁴⁶. The healing happened in Galilee. Here the man asked Jesus to heal him if he wanted. Jesus stretched his hand and touched him and the leprosy left him.

NB: According to Judaism, Jesus became unclean by touching the leper.

Law of purification in Jewish custom

- the leper was brought to the priest with two clean birds
- if a leper was found healed, one bird was killed and its blood sprinkled 7 times over him and the second bird fled.
- the cleaned leper had to bathe, wash his clothes and shave all the hairs on his body.

NB: A priest was the only person to proof that a person has been healed. That is why Jesus ordered the man to go to the priest to be examined and follow what Moses ordered him.

3-Jesus healed the ten lepers. (17:11-19)

On their way to the priest, they were healed, but only one leper who was also a Samaritan returned to Jesus to thank him. The significance of the grateful Samaritan is that the gentiles (outcast) might inherit the kingdom while the Jews remained outside.

4. The healing of the paralytic who was brought to him through an opening on the roof

(5:17-26)

Jesus healed the paralytic to show that *he had power to forgive sins* and also *because of the faith those who carried the man*. This miracle is special because he first forgives, then heals.

'**Forgiveness**' can be defined as the healing of the relationship between God and man. Jesus forgave the paralytic before healing because he wanted to deal with the root cause of his sickness and also that salvation was important

⁴⁶ **Lev. 13: 45-46/14:1:** a leper had to keep away from their clean fellow Jews, had to walk in torn clothes, shave their heads and covers their lips. It is *also called Hansen disease*. This is chronic infectious disease that affects the skin, the peripheral nerves (nerves outside the brain and spinal cord), and the mucous membranes of the nose, throat, and eyes. It is caused by the leprosy bacillus, *Mycobacterium leprae*. Destruction of the peripheral nerves by the bacillus leads to a loss of sensation, which, together with progressive tissue degeneration, may result in the extremities' becoming deformed and eroded. In almost all cultures throughout history, leprosy has aroused dread and loathing about the prospect of incurable disease and a lifetime of progressive disfigurement. At one time "lepers," as those with the disease were long called, were ostracized as unclean and were gathered into isolated "leper colonies" in order to keep them out of sight, to control their contagiousness, and to offer them what little treatment was available. Many parts of the world, and in many cases the disfigurement and disability caused by the infection cannot be reversed.

than physical healing. The opponents of Jesus interpreted this forgiveness as *blasphemy* since, to them only God can forgive sins.

5. Jesus heals a roman officers' servant (7:1-10)

What reasons did the Jews give Jesus to help the Roman officer?

-the centurion loved Jesus.

-the centurion had built the synagogue for the Jews.

NB: the centurion had faith.

The **message which the Roman officer** sent through his friends as Jesus was approaching his house was that:

-sir do not trouble yourself

-I do not deserve to have you come to my house

-neither do I consider myself worthy to come to you in person

-just give the order and my servant will get well.

-I too command my soldiers and they obey.

Reasons why the centurion did not allow Jesus to come to his house

-he believed that Jesus had power to heal from a distance.

-he was ready to submit to Jesus' order although he was a man of orders in the Roman military.

-he knew it was unlawful for a Jew to visit a gentile in his house.

-

NB: The theme shown in the passage is the universal salvation.

6-Jairus' daughter and the woman suffering from hemorrhage (8: 40-56)

After crossing Lake Galilee from east to west, Jesus found many people waiting for him. Among the crowd was Jairus. Jairus was one of the Jewish rulers of the synagogues. He was waiting for Jesus because his only daughter who was 12 years was very sick and at the point of death. So he wanted Jesus to heal her. While Jesus was on his way to Jairus' house, a large crowd followed him and pressed against him. In the crowd there was a woman who suffered a disease called hemorrhage for 12 years. She spent much money on many doctors who tried to heal her, but her condition was worsening all the time. The woman heard about Jesus, and had faith in him. She believed that she could be healed by touching his cloak. She touched Jesus secretly. Immediately her bleeding stopped at once and she felt better inside as a sign of being cured.

Jesus realized that some powers had gone out of him. He then, asked who had touched his clothes. The woman came while trembling and afraid (**Lev. 15: 19-30**). She explained her story to Jesus. Jesus sent her away by citing that her faith had cured her.

Why the hemorrhagic woman came while trembling?

-She made Jesus unclean by touching him.

-unclean women were not supposed to go in public.

-she was afraid of the people who would know she was unclean.

-a woman should not reason with men in public.

While Jesus was speaking to a woman, some men came from the house of Jairus and told him that her daughter has died and needed not to bother Jesus. Jesus told him not to worry but to believe. Jesus raised her up from death.

Jewish mourning customs

The body was kept in a room with relatives and friends.

Weeping and lamenting took place.

Friends provided food and drink.⁴⁷

The hair and parts of the beard were shaved.

The mourners dressed in sackcloth and lasted 3-7 days.

NB: these stories are **similar** because:

- both stories concern females.
- both were saved because of faith.
- both females are addressed as 'daughter'.
- both have a common number of years (12 years).

7. Jesus heals a blind beggar (LK 18: 35-43)

When Jesus was coming near Jericho, there was a blind man sitting by the road begging. When he heard the crown passing by, he wondered what it was and he was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. When he heard this, he cried out, 'Jesus Son of David! Take pity on me!' Jesus then stopped and ordered the blind man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him what he wanted and the blind man asked for sight and Jesus healed him by restoring his sight. Jesus told him that his faith had healed him.

Exorcism (casting out of devils/demons)

(Miracles of casting out devils)

1. Healing of a man with an evil spirit on a Sabbath (4:31-37)

The Jews were astonished and amazed at *Jesus' teachings* and *miracles* because: (**Why Jesus was becoming famous?**)

-He taught with authority than the scribes who were fond of quoting the saying and interpretations of former teachers. But Jesus never quoted past teachers, he used the word of God and gave his own interpretation.

-Evil spirits recognized Jesus as the Holy One of God

-He had authority to command evil spirit to come out. This meant Jesus was more powerful than the devil.

What did the man with an evil spirit say to Jesus?

-*what do you want with us Jesus of Nazareth?*

-*are you here to destroy us?*

-*I know who you are: you are the God's Holy messenger.*

NB: Jesus ordered the spirit to be quiet and ordered it to come out.

2. The healing of a man with evil spirits in the land of Gerasa (Gerasene demoniac)-LUKE 8:26-39

After crossing Lake Galilee, they reached the land of Gerasa⁴⁸ which was inhabited by gentiles. As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, a man with many evil spirits approached Jesus.

Description of the man

-*He was possessed by evil spirits (demons).*

-*he was naked for most of the days*

-*he was not staying at home*

-*spent his time in the burial caves (lived among the tombs).*

-*Night and day he cried and wondered among the tombs.*

-*He had great physical power because he could break chains.*

Reaction of the demoniac man when he saw Jesus

-Threw himself down at Jesus' feet

-he gave a loud cry

-he shouted Jesus '*Jesus Son of the Most high God what do you want with me...?*'

⁴⁷ Because food from the deceased family was unclean due to the presence of the corpse.

⁴⁸ Which is found at the east side of Lake Galilee

-he begged Jesus not to punish him

The evil spirits begged Jesus not to send them into abyss nor to punish them but to send them to the pigs and Jesus allowed them to go. The man was cured but the whole herd of pigs rushed down into the Lake and were all drowned.

The villagers came and were both afraid and angry with Jesus. They begged him to leave their land. The cured man wanted to follow Jesus but he was told to go home and proclaim what the Lord has done to him.

NB: Jesus sent the man home to preach Good News to the gentiles.

NB: evidence showing that the story took place in a gentile land:

The presence of pigs (Jews do not keep pigs)

The title '*Jesus Son of the Most High*' is a pagan way of speaking.

Jesus allowed the man to proclaim to others what has happened.

The new gentile was not allowed to join the group.

Gerasa people were afraid of Jesus because:

Jesus had caused their pigs to drown in the sea

Jesus had tamed an uncontrollable demon possessed man.

How did the people know that the man was really healed?

-the man was sitting at the feet of Jesus.

-he was clothed.

-he was in his right mind.

3. Jesus heals a man with demons (LK 9: 37-43)

Jesus together with three of his disciples went down from the hill and a large crowd met them. From the crowd a man shouted, 'Teacher, I beg you; look at my son, my only son! A spirit attacks him into a fit, so that he forms at the mouth. The man told Jesus that he had asked his disciples to drive it out but they failed. Jesus rebuked his disciples and later healed the boy and gave him back to the man.

NATURE MIRACLES

1. Jesus calms a storm at Lake Galilee (8: 22-25)

On this day, Jesus was going to the Land of Gerasa on the boat. But because Jesus was tired, he slept. A strong wind blew on the lake and the boat began to be filled with water so that they were in great danger. The disciples woke up Jesus telling him about the danger. Jesus got up and gave an order to the wind and stormy water and they died out and it was calm again. Jesus doubted the faith of the disciples but the disciples were amazed and afraid with what Jesus did. The disciples showed lack of **faith** by:

-panicking when they realized that they were in danger.

Response of the disciples when Jesus calmed the storm:

-were amazed

-were afraid

-they asked each other. '*Who is this man? He gives orders to the winds and waves and they obey him*'.

Authority of Jesus over nature shown in this miracle

a) Authority over nature

-Jesus is the Lord and controller of nature.

-he restores peace and order of creation.

2. Jesus feeds a great crowd: The feeding of the 5000 people (LK 9: 10-17)

In his ministry Jesus also fed those who were physically and spiritually hungry. On this day, Jesus and his disciples were hungry and tired, yet many people were waiting to listen to Jesus. Jesus took his disciples on boat to Bethsaida⁴⁹ for them to have a rest. However, people saw them and got there before them. Jesus was moved with pity and began teaching them until it was very late.

The disciples suggested to Jesus to send the people away so that they could buy food. Jesus instead, told the disciples to give the people food. The only food available were 5 loaves and 2 fish. The crowd was made to sit down in groups of fifties and hundreds. Jesus took the 5 loaves and 2 fish and *looked up the sky and gave thanks. He broke the loaves* and gave to his disciples to distribute to the people. All the people ate and were satisfied. The left overs filled the 12 baskets. On this day Jesus fed 5000 men excluding women and children.

RAISING OF THE DEAD

1. The raising of a son of a widow at Nain (Luke 7:11-17)

Event how Jesus encountered the procession of the funeral and how he raised the son

- Jesus and his disciples and a large crowd reached the of Nain
- as he arrived at the city gate a funeral procession came out
- the dead man was the only son of the widow
- Jesus had pity on the widow and said to her, '*do not cry'*
- then he touched the coffin and the men carrying it stopped
- then Jesus said, '*young man get up, I tell you'*
- the dead man got up and began to walk
- Jesus gave him to his mother.

People reacted by saying:

-a great prophet has appeared among us

-God has come to save his people

NB: Jesus became unclean by torching the coffin⁵⁰.

2. The raising of the Jairus daughter (LK 8:40-42, 49-56)

After crossing Lake Galilee from east to west, Jesus found many people waiting for him. Among the crowd was Jairus. **Jairus was one of the Jewish rulers of the local synagogues.** He was waiting for Jesus because his only daughter who was 12 years was very sick and at the point of death. So he wanted Jesus to heal her. On the way some men came from the house of Jairus and told him that her daughter has died and needed not to bother Jesus. Jesus told him not to worry but to believe. Jesus raised her up from death.

Jewish mourning customs

- The body was kept in a room with relatives and friends.
- Weeping and lamenting took place.
- Friends provided food and drink.⁵¹

⁴⁹ It is found on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, near the influx of the Jordan River.

⁵⁰ Numb 19:11, 16

⁵¹ Because food from the deceased family was unclean due to the presence of the corpse.

- The hair and parts of the beard were shaved.
- The mourners dressed in sackcloth and lasted 3-7 days.

Evidences that show that Jairus' daughter was really dead

1. people laughed at Jesus when he said that the daughter is not dead but sleeping (since, they knew that he was really dead)
2. people were crying and mourning for the child
3. the parents were astounded when the daughter got up

Reasons why the reputation of Jesus grew

- Because of his authority in preaching and the miracles he was doing.
- Because of his goodness and compassion for all especially the poor and the afflicted.
- He brought peace and happiness and gave meaning to the life of the poor who had no status in the society.

How the reputation of Jesus did grow?

- People came from everywhere to listen and he cured all their sickness.
- The news of his extra-ordinary activity as a good and great prophet was spread by the poor people.

PARABLES OF JESUS

The word 'parable' comes from the Greek word 'parabole' which means illustration, comparison or analogy. Jesus often used spiritually significant fictional narratives called parables to illustrate his teachings or his point. **A parable** can be defined as:

- *A short story taken from the daily life of people to teach a spiritual truth or a certain moral. Or*
- *A short story that uses familiar situations to illustrate a religious or moral point. Usually, parables were often stories about simple, everyday events.*

Reasons why Jesus used parables in his teachings?

-They catch attention of the hearers by moving and stimulating the listeners by making the message interesting so that people would be alert as the lesson is continuing.

-to avoid debate/discussion

-They are powerful teaching aid since, they are easily remembered.

-To make people think for themselves critically.

-To conceal his true identity as the Messiah since, many people had a wrong idea of who Jesus was.

-Parables enabled one to communicate effectively, since; they were good avenues for passing important teaching. For example, on how to use wealth wisely.

-Parables were used to separate serious seekers of the kingdom of God from the onlookers.

-Parables were used to teach about the kingdom of God and the nature of God such as

His mercy.

1. The parable of the good Samaritan- (LK. 10: 25-37)

The parable was said when a **teacher of the law** came up and tried to trap Jesus of what to do to receive eternal life. Jesus answered him by asking him again, *what is written in the law? How do you understand it?*" the scribe then answered (by quoting Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18) '**Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,** and **love your**

neighbor as yourself. Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." The teacher of the Law wanted to justify himself by asking. '*Who is my neighbor?*' Then he came up with a parable of a Good Samaritan.

THE PARABLE ITSELF

A man travels from Jerusalem to Jericho, a distance of about 20 miles. It was dangerous road, known as "The Way of Blood" because of the robbers. The man attacked and is **beaten, stripped of his clothing** and **wounded** by thieves, he is **left half dead**. Two pass by, doing nothing. The first was a **priest**; the second was a **Levite**. Both of these were of the religious elite in Israel at that time. A **Samaritan comes by and shows compassion. HOW?**

-he poured wine and oils on his wounds. (First aid in those days)

-he bandaged his wounds.

-put him on his animals

-took him to inn to be taken care of and

-he paid all expenses for him.

Jesus then poses the question to the teacher of the law: Which of the three proved to be a neighbor to the one who was beaten? The lawyer replies with the obvious answer: "**He who showed mercy on him.**" Jesus then admonishes the lawyer to do likewise.

Why the Levite and the priest did not help the one who was almost dead?

-touching blood would render them unclean (Lev.21:1)⁵²

-they had to be clean since, they had just attended the temple service.

-They feared they might be implicated in the case (as the one who caused the injury).

-they feared that the robbers might attack them also who might have been hiding nearby.

NB: the parable shows **unconditional love**.

2. The parable of the rich fool - (LK 12: 13-34)

A **fool** is someone who lives as if there is no God. This time, Jesus was warning the people about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (**Lk 12:1-3**). Teaching about the fear of God (**Lk 12:4-7**) and was instructing them on the need to confess Him before men (**Lk 12:8-12**). ***Then someone from the crowd interrupts with a request for Jesus to resolve a family dispute over an inheritance!*** (**Lk 12:13**) This prompted not only a terse response from Jesus, but a warning and parable to the crowd about the dangers of covetousness⁵³ and placing one's confidence in earthly riches.

The Lord's warning is grounded upon an important truth (**Lk 13:15b**) "**for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.**" For material abundance did not prolong the rich man's physical life 2) And it certainly did not ensure that one would be rich toward God!

To illustrate the need to heed this warning, Jesus proceeds to tell, *the parable of the rich fool*.

The parable summarized.

A rich man is richly blessed with large crops. As he considers his situation, he makes plans for the future:

a. To build greater barns to store his crops (**Lk 12:17-18**)

b. To retire and enjoy the fruits of his labors for many years (**Lk 12:19**). Yet God tells him he is a fool! (**Lk 12:20**):

⁵² The Lord said to Moses: "Say to the priests, the sons of Aaron—say to them, 'For a dead person no priest is to defile himself among his people...'"

⁵³ Strong desire to possess something even that which belongs to someone.

- a. Because that very night he is to die, and his soul will be required of him
- b. And the things he had provided, whose will they be? The man assumes that his life consists in the abundance of things he possesses. He thought that his crops will provide for his soul for many years to come.

Why this man is considered a fool and as a selfish person

- He thought he had secured a good future by the farm, forgetting that only God can assure the future.
- He was pre-occupied with his own interest, not minding about his neighbor. He does not consider the needs of others: i.e. the poor. (note the "I's" and "my's")
- He did not think anything about his death. He fails to realize that his "body" is mortal, and will not necessarily live on for many years.
- He thought of only enjoying himself forgetting God. He does not consider that his riches really can't satisfy his "soul"!
- Nor does he thank and glorify God

Lessons from the parable:

- wealth does not assure ones future/security; hence, true security depends on one's relationship with God.
- wealth must be used to help the needy so as to make oneself rich in God's sight
- earthly wealth must not be the sole goal in one's life, since, material things cannot save you. (Job 1:21)

Why is it better to have riches in heaven? Because:

- they are not eaten by moths.*
- they are never stolen by thieves.*
- they never decrease.*

NB: the parable was said when a man in the crowd asked Jesus to ask his brother to share him the wealth their father had left.

Parables on the lost⁵⁴ (chapter 15:1-32)

The **three** parables defend the welcoming of irreligious people by Jesus. The **sinners** can be *gentiles, Jews who do not observe Mosaic Law and rabbinical teachings, adulterers, swindlers* e.t.c. These parables are as follows

- The parable of the lost sheep.
- The parable of the lost coin.
- The parable of the lost son.

These parables show that the mercy of God is to everyone. The former life of a repentant sinner will not be counted for, and again, the pious should not murmur when Jesus shows love for sinners. The parables were said when tax collectors and the teachers of the Law were grumbling that Jesus was welcoming sinners and outcasts even eating with them.

Similarities of the 3 parables:

- sinners are regarded as the lost that must be found.
- God takes initiatives, He goes after the sinner.
- joy when a sinner returns
- the joy is shared.

⁵⁴ These parables can have also titles like: welcoming sinners; mercy to sinners and forgiveness top sinners.

3. The parable of the lost sheep – (15:1-7)

If you have one hundred sheep and you lose one, you leave the ninety nine and look for the lost one until you find it and then you become a happy man again and you put it together the other ones and then you celebrate with your friends for finding your sheep that was lost.

Here, God cannot be indifferent even to a single sinner. That is He cannot be satisfied with 99 righteous people, but he searches for the lost one.

4. The parable of the lost coin (15:1-7)

Some background information of the parable

1. The silver coin, like the Roman denarius, was equivalent to a day's wage.
2. The home of the poorer classes was usually small, with dirt floors and few windows
3. Finding a lost coin in a dark and dusty place would not be easy.

The parable analyzed:

Any woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin:

- a. Will light a lamp, sweep the house, and seek diligently until she finds it
- b. Upon finding it will call her friends and neighbors together to rejoice with her
2. In similar fashion, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Here the joy is expressed when the coin is found, meaning that God is happy when a sinner repents.

5 .The parable of the lost son (forgiving father) 15: 11-32)

The **Pharisees** and **scribes** were not happy because they thought that the holiness of people would be preserved if sinners are isolated, hence, they criticized Jesus for receiving sinners. The Rabbi taught that God is happy when sinners perish from the world.

In this parable, the *kissing* of the father signifies *forgiving*. The **elder son** can be Israel, Pharisees⁵⁵, scribes, who are concerned about themselves and did not care the fate of the brothers (gentiles). God is calling them that salvation is for all.

Analyzing the parable of "the prodigal son"

A. his departure from home - Lk 15:11-13a

The younger son asks his father to give him his portion of the inheritance due him. According to the Law of Moses, the eldest son received a double portion - cf. **Deut 21:17**. Since there were two sons, the younger son would receive one-third. Like so many impatient young people today, the younger son: desired to be free from parental restraints desired to have his father's inheritance "now." The father grants him his request, and the younger son soon takes all that he has to a distant country.

B. his life abroad - Lk 15:13b-19

With "prodigal" (wasteful, extravagant) living, he soon depletes his possessions. His poverty is complicated by a famine striking the country. In desperation, he hires himself to another to feed his pigs: This would be most degrading to a Jew, for pigs were considered unclean - cf. **Lev 11:7**. With great hunger, he would have gladly eaten what was given to the pigs. He finally comes to his senses: Recalling how well fed were his father's hired servants.

⁵⁵ The **elder son** is a model of Pharisee. This is evident from:1)His relationship with God i.e. he always works for God and keeps the law without disobeying orders.2)His relationship with sinners i.e. he refuses to accept his sinful young brother as his brother, he judges and condemns his brother, he refuses to join his young brother at the feast. 3)His reaction to his father's love for his sinful brother i.e. he is angry that his father still loves that son.

They had plenty, and here he was, perishing with hunger! So to hunger and humiliation, there is now added homesickness. He resolves to return home: To confess his sin against heaven (i.e., God's will) and his father. To confess his unworthiness to be called his father's son. To be made only like one of his father's hired servants

C. his return home - Lk 15:20-32

Carrying out his resolution, the prodigal son returns home. While still a great way away, the father sees him (had he been looking for his son?). The father's great love is immediately evident: 1) He has compassion.2) He runs to greet his son. 3) He throws his arms around his son's neck. 4) He kisses him

The son quickly confesses his sin, and his unworthiness to be called a son. But before he can even say "Make me one of your hired servants", the father joyfully calls upon his servants to: 1) Bring out the best robe and put it on him. 2) Put a ring on his hand, and sandals on his feet. 3) Kill the fatted calf in order to celebrate his return. All of which serve to reinstate the son as a person of importance and authority.

D. Jealously of the elder brother - Lk 15:25-32

The elder son, returning from the field, wonders what the celebration is about. When told by one of the servants, he angrily refuses to go in. The father comes out, and pleads with him. The elder son's complaints: a) For many years he had served his father. b) He had never transgressed his father's will

c) The father had never provided such a celebration for him. d) But when the son who squandered his father's inheritance with harlots returns home, the fatted calf is killed for him!

2) The father's response:

- b) He recognizes the elder son's faithfulness ("**you are always with me**")
- c) He reassures the son that the remaining inheritance is his ("**all that I have is yours**")
- d) Yet the father maintains that it is right to celebrate. "**Your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.**"

How are all these THREE parables similar?

- they all talk about the lost thing.
- the owner is in great pains after the loss.
- the owner takes initiative to look for the lost.
- there is great rejoicing after the lost and the joy is shared by all.

Lessons from the parable:

- upright and sinners can be accepted, since salvation is for all
- lapse Christians be searched for.
- searching for lapse Christian is not a waste of time.
- we should be happy if a lapse Christian has repented.

THE DISCIPLESHIP: THE MEANING OF A DISCIPLE AND AN APOSTLE

Jesus had 12 disciples who would help him proclaim the Good News to all people after his resurrection and ascension. The term **disciple** means a learner. The term **disciple** comes from the Latin word *discipulus* which means pupil or learner. However, the term disciple, in the Bible is used to mean people who followed and listened to the teachings of Jesus.

The term an **apostle**, means a follower of Jesus or a missionary or *one who is sent out*. The word apostle comes from Greek word *apostolos*, which means a "messenger or a person sent". In the Bible therefore, apostles were the people that were chosen and sent into the world by Jesus": To preach and teach the gospel, heal the sick and drive out demons using His name and authority.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON DISCIPLESHIP

The would be followers of Jesus (9:57-62)

In this passage THREE people can be analyzed:

The **first man** volunteered to follow Jesus, but did not know that discipleship involves suffering. The answer of Jesus suggests the ‘**sacrificial spirit**’.⁵⁶ Birds and animals have a place to stay unlike Jesus. So the follower of Jesus should not expect to live a comfortable life. This suggest that there is little time for resting and comforting.

The **second man** thought he could follow Jesus at his own convenient time. I.e. burying the dead involves a number of days. And after burying the dead one does not get any spiritual benefit. The answer of Jesus suggests ‘**immediacy of obedience**.’ A follower should be ready to do the mission urgently without any delays.

The **third man** lacked focus since he wanted to bid farewell (goodbye) to his household. This man values family ties more than the urgency in following Jesus. The answer of Jesus suggests ‘**determination**’ in following Jesus. The follower must know that once the mission starts, he must be ready to forge ahead and not think of going back at some point.

NB: the passage stresses the idea of total commitment in following Jesus. The place of abode is in heaven.

The cost of being a disciple 14:25-33)

The large number of people wanted to be his disciples *but did not realize what this meant/involves*. The **cross** stands for ‘**suffering**’ and ‘**death**’, hence, a disciple must be ready to suffer and die for the sake of Jesus (the love for Jesus should surpass the love one shows to his/her parents, children or sisters or brother). Meaning that the love for Jesus must be beyond the way one loves family members, possessions and his own life. This was a warning that the one who wanted to follow Jesus must be ready to give up their priorities and be ready to suffer like him. Then Jesus narrated the **two parables**:

1. Planning to build a house/tower –vv28-30
2. Planning to wage war –vv31-32

In these parables he is encouraging his disciples to think first before starting doing something than starting it then fail to finish. Jesus encouraged them that before they start following him, they should make a decision that will not be reversed. This means seriousness, will and strength are needed if one wants to be a disciple.

The call of peter and his miraculous catch of fish (LK 5:1-11)

On this day Jesus was teaching from a boat while the people were on the sea shore of Lake Galilee (Genesaret⁵⁷).

Jesus spoke from the water because:

- A voice is carried well over water, so the crowd could hear him well.
- The crowd had a better view of Jesus.
- the separation prevents disturbances; so Jesus could focus on teaching and the people on listening

Four reactions of Peter before Jesus:

- Doubting i.e. he failed to catch fish during good time at time, how can the one catch fish during the day.
- he then put confidence in Jesus’ word and did what Jesus asked for. I.e. lowering the net.
- He realized his sinfulness before Jesus (who has divine power) after the great catch
- He showed faith and total surrender to follow Jesus (Immediacy of obedience).

The call of Levi (Matthew)- the tax collector-LK 5:27-32

⁵⁶ ‘Fox’ refers to Herod Antipas and his supporters. ‘birds of the air’ refer the Roman occupying forces (soldiers)

⁵⁷ It is 13 miles long and 7. 5 miles wide.

History of tax collection

In the Roman times, many Jews in Palestine were agents of tax collecting. Each one was allocated a certain area from which the amount of taxes to be collected was based on census. Tax collectors had to pay the targeted amount to his superior officer whether he collected or not. It was up to him to collect enough money from the people, not only to meet his contract but also to keep something for himself as well.

Why the tax collectors were hated by many Jews? Because they

-*were thought to be greedy, dishonest and unjust. I.e. they were enriching themselves by collecting more than necessary.*

-*they were considered as collaborators (workmates) of the Romans (agents of pagan conqueror.)*

-*they were unclean since they were in constant with unclean things like gentiles and money.*

-*the Jews hated to pay tax because the tax was a painful reminder that they are under the roman rule.*

Jesus asked Levi to leave his well –paying job and riches to follow him. Levi obeyed and followed Jesus, leaving everything behind. Then Levi had a big feast in his house for Jesus and among the guests were a large number of **tax collectors** and other people.

NB: when Jesus was asked why he is associating with sinners, he said, *he did not come to call respectable people...but outcasts (sinners.)*

Levi showed a true discipleship by:

-getting up and followed Jesus.

-he left everything

While in Levi's house, Jesus was **accused of letting his disciples live without fasting**. Then Jesus came up with **three parables**:

1) -*guests do not fast in the presence of the bridegroom.*

-*the wedding feast has started as such there is no need of fasting.*

2) -*No one tears a piece of a new coat to patch up an old coat. This will make the new coat not to match with the old coat.*

3) -*no one pours new wine into used wine skin because the new wine will burst the skins and the wine will pour out.*

Allegorical references of the words used:

Bridegroom-Jesus

Guests-the disciples of Jesus

The wedding feast-the kingdom of God.

Old wine-old customs which the Jewish leaders were doing.

New wine-Good News of Jesus.

Jesus chooses the twelve apostles

The disciples of Jesus came from all walks of life. They included fishermen, political activists, tax collectors, common people, the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated. This choice of his disciples shows that he came for everyone and that everyone can be a learner and a follower of Jesus. Again, this choice was a symbol of '*unity from diversity*.' Before choosing these apostles, Jesus prayed to God asking Him to guide him when choosing the apostles.

These 12 disciples graduated into apostles on the day of Pentecost, where these disciples received the Holy Spirit to carry out their ministry.

The first **three** disciples to be called were all **fishermen**. They were called while fishing in the Lake Galilee. These were *Simon* (Peter), *James* and *John*. The last two were brothers, the sons of Zebedee. They were given the nicknames of '**Boanerges**' which means '*men of thunder*.'

Names of all 12 apostles are as follows: (**Luke 6:12-16.**)

Simon also called Peter, which means 'rock.'

-Andrew⁵⁸(the brother of Peter)

-James (son of Zebedee)

-John, (son of Zebedee)

-Philip⁵⁹.

-Bartholomew.

-Matthew. Once the tax collector.

-Thomas.

-James, the son of Alphaeus. He was also called 'James the less.'

-Thaddeus, or Judas, the son of James.

-Simon the Cananaean, or the Zealot (patriot).

-Judas Iscariot (he was the treasure of the group and he was the one who betrayed Jesus)

The privileges of the Twelve were to be in continual attendance on their master and to be the recipients of his special teaching and training. Three of them, **Peter**, **James**, and **John**, formed an inner circle who alone were permitted to witness such events as the raising of Jairus' daughter (**Mark 5:37**; Luke 8:51), the Transfiguration (**Mark 9**; Matthew 17; Luke 9), and the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (**Mark 14:33**; Matthew 26:37).

Special **importance** seems to have been **attached to the number 12**, which some scholars interpret as a reference to the 12 tribes of Israel. This means the apostles are to lay the foundation of the new Israel or new people of God just like the 12 sons formed the foundation of the people of God, the Israelites.

NB: When a gap had been left by the defection and death of the traitor Judas Iscariot, immediate steps were taken to fill it by the election of Matthias (Acts 1). In this case the number 12 represented the 12 tribes of Israel.

THE 12 ARE SENT OUT (LK 9 :1-12)

Why did Jesus send them?

- to put into practice what they had learned.
- To train them and prepare for their future mission.
- to reach more people, since time was limited but the work was plenty.
- to preach, heal and cast out demons.

Instructions for the journey

⁵⁸ One of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ and the brother of Simon Peter. A Galilean fisherman of Bethsaida, he was originally a disciple of John the Baptist. Andrew was crucified at Patras, in Achaea, on an X-shaped cross, the form of which became known as Saint Andrew's Cross.

⁵⁹ One of the 12 disciples of Jesus Christ, born in Bethsaida. Philip is mentioned as one of the apostles in the first three Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, but the little that is known of his life is recorded in the Gospel of John. When chosen by Jesus as a disciple, he was a follower of John the Baptist; later he brought Nathanael to Jesus as new disciple

- to take nothing-i.e. no stick no money,⁶⁰ no beggar's bag, no food, no money and no extra shirt.
- If welcomed in one house, they stay there until they leave.⁶¹
- if not welcomed at a certain town they have to shake off dust from their feet.⁶²WHY?
 - *It was a sign of curse that they would be punished.*
 - *The apostles would not be blamed.*
 - *As assign that they have rejected the free gift of salvation.*

Activities done by the disciples on this mission

- preach
- healing the sick
- casting out demons

NB: The mission of the 12 was effective to the extent that it confused **Herod ANTIPAS**.

After this incident we are told that Jesus also sent seventy and sent them two by two to go ahead of him to every town and the place he himself was about to go. (**Luke 10:1-11**)

Reasons Jesus sent them two by two

- to bear witness upon each other
- to encourage each other during the missionary activities

THE TEACHING OF JESUS CONCERNING THE SABBATH

Definition of Sabbath

The word 'Sabbath' comes from Hebrew *Shabbat*, derived from the verb *shavat*, which means "**to rest, cease" or "to desist"**). To the Jews they had 'to-stop their daily endeavors in order - to- **praise**- God'. It was a day of rest even for animals in honour of God who rested on the seventh day. Rabbis had listed 39 activities forbidden on the Sabbath e.g. preparing food (Ex 16:23), Making a fire (Ex 35:3), Walking more than 1250 meters, Clapping hands, harvesting (Ex 34:21), etc. Keeping the Sabbath was a way for Jews to show in public that they were Jews. Breaking the Sabbath was like ceasing to be a Jew.

THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS TOWARDS THE SABBATH

- Jesus respected the Sabbath rules. For example Jesus often goes to the synagogue on the Sabbath.
- Jesus would break the rules if they hinder him from relieving suffering; the life of a human being is more important than keeping the Sabbath. This is so because Love of God and neighbor is more important than Sabbath Law. Therefore, breaking the law in order to someone is really observing the law.
- Healing on the Sabbath was a sign that he was the Lord of the Sabbath; hence, he can change it or suspend it.

The question about Sabbath -Luke 6: 1-5.

In this passage, according to the **Pharisees** and **scribes**, the *disciples* broke the Sabbath by:

- harvesting on the Sabbath i.e. picking of corn from the field.**
- threshing corn on the Sabbath i.e. rubbing of corn in their hands**
- preparing food on the Sabbath i.e. the taking away of husks and eating.**

⁶⁰ Why? They would travel light and fast since they will not carry unnecessary things

⁶¹ Why? They would not waste time in seeking hospitality in different houses.

⁶² Shaking the dust off was done by Jews who had been in a gentile area and who have refused to listen.

Jesus defended the action of his apostles by referring to what David did. When David and his men were hungry, he went to the house of the Lord and ate the bread meant to be eaten by the priest. Jesus said this because he wanted to show them that even the OT is not upholding the strict legalism which the Pharisees had developed. Helping the needy on the Sabbath is not going against the Law.(since David and his men were very hungry and the priest gave the bread meant for himself)

Jesus heals a crippled woman on a Sabbath (LK 13:10-17)

One Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in a synagogue

- a woman was there who had an evil spirit who made her ill for 18 years**
- she was bent and could not straighten up**
- Jesus said to her, 'Woman, you are free from your illnesses'**
- He placed his hands on her**
- at once the back was straightened and she praised the Lord**

NB: this made the synagogue official to be **angry** and he **told the people** to come on other days to be healed not on Sabbath. Jesus answered that you hypocrites; *anyone can untie his donkey on Sabbath to drink water. What more this woman who was bounded by Satan for 18 years.*⁶³

Jesus heals a sick man in the house of a Pharisee on a Sabbath (14 1-6)

As Jesus was eating in the house of a Pharisee, people were watching Jesus closely. A man whose legs and arms were swollen came to Jesus. Jesus asked the scribes and the Pharisees whether the law allows healing on the Sabbath or not. The people did not answer anything. Then he healed the man and sent him away.

NB: Here Jesus wanted to teach the people that the issue of love of the neighbor is more important despite what the Sabbath says.

TEACHING ABOUT TAX

JESUS AND ZACCHEAUS- (19:1-10)

On this day Jesus was in Jericho. Jesus said to Zacchaeus. '*Hurry down Zacchaeus because I must stay in your house today'*

Events that made Jesus say these words

- Jesus was passing through Jericho
- there was a chief tax collector named Zacchaeus
- he was rich
- he was trying to see Jesus
- but he was a little man
- he could not see Jesus because of the crowd
- he ran ahead of the crowd
- and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus
- Jesus saw him and asked him to hurry down.

⁶³ The statement of Jesus meant that:

1. If caring for animals is allowed on Sabbath then caring for human beings is more important
2. Satan is active seven days a week; He too (Jesus) must fight the Satan on all days including on the Sabbath
3. The Sabbath relives man of the burden of work; then Jesus frees her from the burden of sickness thereby making her rest.

When the people saw that Jesus is going to the house of Zacchaeus, they started grumbling by saying that '*this man has gone as a guest to the house of a sinner.*' The reasons that Jesus gave for associating with sinners were that:

- Zacchaeus was also a descendant of Abraham*
- Jesus came to seek and to save the lost*

Signs that show conversion/repentance of Zacchaeus:

- he received Jesus joyfully in his house.
- he gave half of his goods to the poor.⁶⁴
- the remaining half was used to make restitution for the fraud⁶⁵.

The parable of the wicked tenants (20:9-18)

In this parable Jesus vividly describes the sinfulness of those religious leaders who were rejecting the very Son of God!

'There was once a man who planted a vine yard and let it to tenants and then left home for a long time...'

The parable is based on the following custom: Owners of estates in Palestine who lived abroad rented their land to tenants who paid rent with part of the harvest? If the heir of the owner died, the tenants had the first right to the land. Jesus narrated this parable after the controversial issue of his authority.

The owner of the vineyard **sent 3 servants** and his son to receive the share of the harvest. But one after another **all the three servants were beaten up, treated shamefully, wounded** and some **sent them without anything**. At last, the son too was **thrown out of the vine** and **killed him**. Then Jesus asked what the owner will do. Jesus answered that he will kill those people tenants and hand over the vineyard to other tenants. Then he told them that '*the stone which the builder rejected as worthless turned out to be the most important of all.*'(Psalms 118:22-23). Here Jesus wanted to show that

- The one whose authority they were refusing was the person sent and chosen by God.
- Jesus was the foundation of their salvation on whom the faith of people was founded and he was going to be their judge one day.

Allegorical references:

- vineyard**=God's chosen people (Jews).
- Owner of the vineyard**=God.
- tenants**=Jewish leaders (chief priests, scribes, elders, and all their followers- as a nation, Israel rejected many of her prophets -cf. **2 Chr 36:15-16**)
- servants**=different prophets.
- son**=Jesus Christ
- threw outside vineyard**=Jesus was killed outside Jerusalem.
- Others (tenants)**-gentiles

What was the reaction of the Jews?

- they tried to have him arrested, but were afraid of the people.

NB: the destruction of the tenants, meant destruction of Jewish leaders and Jerusalem (in 70 AD). The giving of the vineyard to others meant the transfer of God's kingdom to the new people of God. In other words, the

⁶⁴ Used his wealth to make God his friend.

⁶⁵ the crime of obtaining money or some other benefit by deliberate deception

replacement of the wicked tenants by others meant, unfaithful religious leaders of Israel will be replaced by gentle leaders in the new Israel, the church. If we do not utilize our special privileges

- a. God will take away the blessings we have
- b. And give it to someone who appreciates it and bear the fruit of it.

NB: The parable is similar to the one used in the **OT** in **Isaiah 5:1-7⁶⁶**.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON PRAYER (11: 1-4)

Prayer is the communion of man with his or her creator. It is an expression of a religious nature of human beings. Therefore, **Praying** is spending time with God, alone (or with others), putting oneself in His presence in silence or speaking to Him, thanking and praising God, asking for forgiveness and for the knowledge of His will, telling Him about one's needs and the needs of others. For example, Abraham prayed to God for a son and a Hannah prayed to God for a son. It was common for Rabbis to teach his disciples a simple prayer which they have to use. On this day, Jesus had been praying in a certain place, when He ceased praying, one of His disciples asked: "**Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.**" In answering that request, Jesus did two things:

- a. He first told them "**how to pray** and "**what to pray for**".
- b. He then told a parable to stress a crucial element in "how" to pray.

Why the 'Our Father' is a model (example/pattern) of prayer? It is a model of prayer because we learn the "**what**" of prayer should include such things as:

- 1) Reverence for God and His "Name" which means, **it begins by giving God his respect** - Lk 11:2
- 2) **Praying for the progress of God's Kingdom and Will on the earth** - Lk 11:2
- 3) Asking for **physical necessities -it asks for food for the present** - Lk 11:3
- 4) Our **spiritual needs:**
 - a) **Forgiveness of sins** as we forgive others- Lk 11:4
 - b) **Protection and deliverance from evil** - Lk 11:4

Meanings of the following petitions of the Lord's Prayer

1. Give us this day the food we need
-they must not be anxious for God loves them and will provide their needs (22:22-31)
2. Forgive us our sins
- disciples must pray for forgiveness which is granted only to those who forgive others.
3. Lead us not into temptation
-the disciples must pray for protection from tribulation and testing which would weaken their faith and exclude them from the kingdom of God

Parables for perseverance in prayer:

- a) **A friend at mid-night (11:5-8)**

The parable summarized.

- You find yourself with company and inadequate provisions
- Yet you know that you can go to your friend's house and borrow some food

⁶⁶ **The parable of the vineyard**, where the farmer worked hard but the field did not respond to the care, since, it produced sour grapes.

- Even if it late at night, and he and his family are already in bed, he would normally not help you, even though you are a friend yet you know that if you "persist", he will help you! – **Lk 11:5-8.** The 'friend' gives the loaf because he does not want to look rude.

b) The widow and the judge (18: 1-7)

The parable itself

A. the character of the judge - Lk 18:2

1. One who did not fear God nor regard man.
2. An unjust judge, for which this parable is sometimes known as "**The Unjust Judge.**"

B. the distress of the widow - Lk 18:3

1. She has some opponent who has wronged her.
2. She seeks the aid of the judge to avenge her.

C. the difficulty she faced - Lk 18:4a

1. The judge would not help her at first.
2. Repeated attempts seem to fall on deaf ears.

D. at last the judge heeds her complaint - Lk 18:4b-5

1. Not out of any love for what was right in the sight of God or man.
2. But only to avoid being wearied by her constant appeals.

The two parables don't answer the requests out of love. The '**friend**' and the '**judge**' answer requests for help, even if they have no love. God loves His children; how much surer will He then answer their prayers, certainly when they ask for what they really need.

These parables show that people should pray with **faith, determination and hope.**

Jesus' point seems to be this. If persistence with a friend will prove fruitful. If earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to their children how much more will persistence prove fruitful with our heavenly Father!

The importance of persistence - Lk 11:9-12

It is those who ask, seek, and knock, who will receive, find, and have doors opened to encourage persistence in prayer, Jesus speaks of earthly fathers and their sons. If a son asks his father for bread, while he give him a stone? If he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead? If he asks for an egg, will the father offer him a scorpion? Each of these rhetorical questions implies a definite "No!" Then how much more will our heavenly Father gives us that which is good? If earthly fathers, though evil, know how to give good gifts to their children. How much more will our heavenly Father give the Spirit to those who ask Him?

The parable of the Pharisee and that tax collector (18:9-14)

Jesus illustrated the spirit that ought to pervade our prayers. He teaches us how and in what manner we ought to pray to be heard by God. The parable is about two different men, they both go to the temple to pray one is a Pharisee, the other a tax-collector. Pharisees were a religious sect, noted for their strict observance of the Law and the traditions of the elders. Tax-collectors were considered by the Pharisees to be extortioners and traitors:

- 1) *Extortioners*, because they collected more than was required, for personal gain.
- 2) *Traitors*, because while Jews they represented an occupying power (Rome)

The parable goes to those who considered themselves good and despised others. It teaches that **humility** is needed for one to enter heaven.

The Pharisee's prayer was false because:

- he exalted himself for his piety.⁶⁷-he said that he is not greedy, dishonest nor an adulterer.
- he despised his neighbor/others. (he is boastful in his prayer)
- he was self-sufficient in God's presence; hence, he has no need of God. (he speaks to himself not to God)

The tax collector's prayer was true because:

- he was humble and is aware of God's presence.
- he confessed his sins and asked for God's mercy.

OTHER TEACHINGS OF JESUS

- **ON FASTING**

Jesus taught that fasting was unnecessary because the bride groom was around (Jesus). When the bridegroom will be taken away people will fast. Jesus used the example of 'putting the new patch on the old cloth', and 'pouring of new wine in the old wine skin.'

ON FORGIVENESS AND ON JUDGING OTHERS

- Jesus taught that if a person forgives others, God in heaven will forgive the person's sins
- Human beings have to exercise forgiveness of one another in order to enjoy God's fellowship.
- Jesus taught that people do should not judge others and God will not judge us.
- We should not condemn others.
- No person can take a speck out of his/her friend's eye yet he has got a log in his/her eyes.
- One blind man cannot lead another blind man

Jesus at the home of Simon the Pharisee-(7:36-50)

On this day **Simon the Pharisee** invited Jesus to dine with him. However, a sinful woman came in with an alabasters jar full of expensive perfume. The woman wet the feet of Jesus with tears and dried them with her hair, kissed them and poured the perfume on them. Simon the Pharisee said in her heart, '*if this man really was a prophet, he would know who this woman is...he would know that she is a sinner.*' Jesus knew what Simon was thinking. In response, **Jesus narrated the parable of the two debtors** and at last Jesus forgave the woman because of her faith.

The parable of the two debtors

- there were two men who owed a money lender*
- One owed him 500 silver coins and the other owed him 50*
- neither of them could pay him*
- he cancelled the debts of both*

NB: then Jesus asked him a question, '*Which one will love him more?*' Simon said '*the one who was forgiven more.*'

Lessons from the parable

- the woman who has been forgiven more shows greater love than the Pharisee who thought had few/no sins
- Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

The difference between the way Simon welcomed Jesus and the way the woman welcomed Jesus:

- Simon did not wash the feet of Jesus but the woman did as a sign of welcoming
- Simon did not kiss Jesus but the woman did as sign of love
- Simon did not anoint Jesus but the woman did to show respect/ honour.

⁶⁷ The Pharisees fasted twice: Mondays and Thursdays.

NB: The Jewish custom required that when a visitor comes to a home he should be given a kiss, water to wash feet and be anointed with oil on the head. The Pharisee did not do all this but the sinful woman did all this because of her love for Jesus.

- **ON THE IDENTITY OF JESUS CHRIST**

The transfiguration (9: 28-36)

While Jesus was praying on the hill his disciples saw him being transfigured. Transfiguration means change of appearance. This incident took place at Mt. Hermon (Tabor). Jesus took 3 disciples: **Peter, James and John**.

The two men (Elijah and Moses) were talking about the way in which Jesus would soon fulfill God's purpose by dying in Jerusalem. The **cloud** represents God's presence.

Reaction of Peter and other disciples to what they had seen

-it is good that we are here

-let us make three tents: one for Jesus, one for Moses and the other for Elijah

NB: The finding of Jesus between Elijah and Moses means Jesus is the fulfillment of the LAW and PROPHET (who already spoke about his death).

- **ON HUMILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Jesus heals a sick man in the house of a Pharisee on a Sabbath (14: 1-6)

The setting.

Jesus had gone to eat at the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on the Sabbath .**They had watched Him closely**, perhaps to see if he would heal the man with dropsy?⁶⁸ Jesus posed a question about the lawfulness of healing on the Sabbath .To which they did not respond .Then Jesus healed the man and posed another question revealing their inconsistency (Lk 14:4-6): The Pharisees could show mercy to animal which fell in a well on the Sabbath, but did not want to show mercy to a man whose legs and arms were swollen on the Sabbath.

CHOOSING PLACES AT THE TABLE- HUMILITY (Luke 14:8-11)

Jesus had also been watching them closely: He had noted *how those invited were selecting the best places to sit*. It is thought that the seating arrangements at that time may have involved three tables in the shape of a flat-bottomed "U" "**The triclinia**"⁶⁹, or Grecian table, then in use had three sections which were placed together so as to form a flat-bottomed U. The space enclosed by the table was not occupied. It was left vacant that the servants might enter it and attend to the wants of the guests who reclined around the outer margin of the table."

"The central seat of each of these three sections was deemed a place of honor.

This petty positioning around the tables prompted Jesus to teach a lesson using a parable.

The setting is a wedding feast, a common social event in those days Jesus warns against sitting down in the best place:

⁶⁸Also called *oedema*, plural *edemas*, or *edemata*, The accumulation of fluid in the lungs can cause lung congestion (filling of the alveoli with in medicine, an abnormal accumulation of watery fluid in the intercellular spaces of connective tissue. Edematous tissues are swollen and, when punctured, secrete a thin incoagulable fluid. may be a general one (*e.g.*, nephrotic edema). The term dropsy is somewhat archaic, and edema has come to be the preferred term.

⁶⁹a couch arranged around three sides of a table and used by ancient Romans to recline on at meals

- a. Someone more honorable/important may have been invited,
- b. When they arrive, the host will ask you to move
- c. With shame you will have to move to the lowest place (Likely the only place left!)

HOSPITALITY- what advice did Jesus give to those hosting a party?

- When we have a party we should invite everyone, not our friends only.
- If the poor are invited, God will bless us since, the poor cannot pay back.

HUMILITY-We must have a true estimate of our values and not to put ourselves forward as better than we are i.e. the scribes and Pharisees thought they were God's favorites but Jesus warned them that they might be last in the kingdom of God.

What Jesus says about choosing places when one is invited to a function/weeding feast?

- we should not sit down in a best place
- because someone more important could be invited.
- and you will be embarrassed.
- when you will be asked to sit in the lowest place.
- instead when invited sit in a low place
- so that the host will offer you a better place.
- this will bring you honour in the presence of all guests.

CONCLUSION

Through this simple parable, Jesus has taught us a most important truth: the need to be humble in our relations with God and those around us! Humility is not a popular grace in our culture:

- a. It is considered a sign of weakness by many.
- b. People fear that they will be made a floor mat by others

Jesus blesses little children (18: 15-17)

The lesson here is that salvation will be given to those who are prepared to receive it like children who are **humble**. God's kingdom is for those who are poor in spirit and acknowledges their insufficiency.

• **ON SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH THE MIRACLE OF FEEDING THE CROWD**

Jesus feeds a great crowd: The feeding of the 5000 people (LK 9: 10-17)

In his ministry Jesus also fed those who were physically and spiritually hungry. In this ministry, Jesus solved the crisis of food by feeding the multitude.

THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT FEAST (14:15-24)

The setting.

Jesus is in the same house eating along with a number of *lawyers (scribes)* and *Pharisees*. He had just told the parable of "**Taking the Lowest Place**". He then tells His host that when he has a dinner or a supper, that he ought to invite those who cannot repay him. Jesus is not saying that we can "never" have our friends, etc. He is stressing hospitality towards those who cannot repay us in this life. Jesus' comments prompt a response from one who heard Him "*how happy are those who will sit down at the feast in the kingdom of God!*"

The language of Christ implied that God himself would feast those who feasted the poor, and this implication accorded with the Jewish notion that the kingdom of God would be ushered in with a great festival.

The parable itself.

A certain man gives a great supper and extends his invitation. However; those invited began to make excuses...

- a. One had bought a **piece of ground**, and said he must go see it.
- b. Another had bought five **yoke of oxen**, and wanted to test them.
- c. A third said he had **married**, and could not come.

The master, being angry, sends his servant to go out and invite others...

- a. At first, the poor, maimed, lame and blind (i.e., social outcasts)
- b. But there is still room, so the servant is sent out again, to compel those among the highways and hedges to come. But those invited who made excuses would not taste of his supper. Jesus does not explain the meaning of this parable, so we are left on our own. Here are some thoughts in regards to the parable:

Firstly, the feast (kingdom of God) will be filled with **gentiles** (those not yet invited in the first place).

Jesus corrects the Jewish false hope that salvation is only for the Jews.

1. God has graciously extended the invitation of salvation, along with its future blessings, to many
 - a. To the Jew first, and also to the Greek (i.e. the Gentiles)
 - b. God certainly desires all to be saved, not wanting any to perish - **1 Tim 2:3-6; Tit 2:11; 2 Pet 3:9**
 - c. And so the invitation has been made to all - cf. **Rev 22:17**
2. Sadly, though, many will not accept the invitation, making excuses. These excuses may involve things that within themselves are noble such as business responsibilities or family responsibilities. The problem is that priorities are misplaced, and one should not allow earthly matters to take priority over spiritual matters.

CONCLUSION

The Lord has certainly prepared a wonderful "supper", and has extended the invitation to all .The danger is allowing the affairs of life to keep us from accepting this gracious invitation.

ALLEGORICAL DETAILS:

Man is God

Great feast means the Gospel;

Invited guests=Jewish elders;

The servant=Jesus;

Excuses =how the Jews rejected the Gospel

Street people (the poor, crippled, blind and lame)=Jews considered as outcasts

Far in the country / those in country roads and lanes =gentiles.

- **ON SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:ON THE USES OF MONEY/RICHES.**

Jesus taught the people that riches have to be sold out and the money be given to the poor in the society. It is of no use to keep riches on earth where a thief can steal and rust and moth can destroy, but riches should be kept in heaven where they cannot be stolen nor destroyed:

The rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31)

The rich man resembles the Pharisees or anyone who loves money and selfishly and shortsightedly disregarded Lazarus (the poor, or any person in need of charity). Abraham's bosom signifies a heavenly banquet. The address of the rich man, '**father Abraham**' indicates Jewish descent from Abraham. The response of Abraham '**son**'

indicates that although, a rich man was a Jew, it did not guarantee heavenly bliss. Great fire and great gulf indicate great separation between the two worlds.

NB: the rich man knew what Moses and prophets⁷⁰ taught on social responsibility towards the poor, so he had no excuse for not helping the poor (Lazarus). Failure to practice **love** and **mercy** led to loss of new life.

Lessons from the parable:

- to be indifferent/non-concern to the needs of others is a sin.
- rich people/nations have a duty to help the poor people/ nations.

NB: it was a common belief that whoever suffered any misfortune, be it sickness and as such people could not enter the kingdom of God. They believed that those who were rich and owned property were favored by God, hence, would automatically enter heaven. Again, this parable does not mean that the poor (materially) are friends of God and that the rich are enemies of God. Anyone can resemble this rich man if:

- One is too worldly
- If one is not listening what the Bible says
- If one is evil.

The (young) rich man (18: 18-30)

The teaching of Jesus shocked the disciples and the rich man, since, many Jews regarded riches a sign of divine favour while poverty as curse, But Jesus said '*it is hard for rich people to enter heaven than a camel to go through the eye of a needle*' The rich man thought that he could gain salvation by a single heroic action. Jesus emphasizes that **lack of detachment to riches can deter one's salvation**. That is why the man was sad when he was told to sell his property and donate the money to the poor then become a disciple of Jesus. In summary Jesus wanted to teach him that detachment is important when one wants to follow Jesus.

• THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON WOMEN IN SERVICE (LK 8:1-3)

In his ministry, Jesus was travelling in different places preaching the Good News. This means Jesus valued women and respected them. Some women who had been healed from diseases and from evil spirits were following Jesus helping him with their own resources. Examples of such women are, Joanna (the wife of Chuza, Susanna). Some of these women prepared the spices for Jesus after his death. And some of the were the first witness to the resurrection.

Jesus visits Martha and Mary (10: 38-42)

a) How did Martha welcome Jesus?

- she worked to prepare food for Jesus
- she received him as a guest

b) How did Mary welcome Jesus?

- She sat at the feet of Jesus listening to his teaching
- She welcomed him as a teacher

c) Why Jesus recommend the reception of Mary?

- because listening to Jesus is more important than caring for him as a guest.

• ON LIFE AFTER DEATH AND THE MESSIAH

⁷⁰ C,F Isaiah 58: 6-9

The **Sadducees** who did not believe in life after death wanted to trap Jesus and refute his teachings on life after death⁷¹. The dilemma of the question was who will be the owner of the woman at resurrection, since all the 7 men married her.⁷² Jesus said at resurrection people will be like angels⁷³. He proved that God is a God of the living not dead by citing the calling of Moses that God revealed to Moses that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (**Ex.3:1-6**)

On the Messiah, Jesus asked the teacher of the Law what the scripture meant when it said that the Messiah would be the descendants of David. And what it meant when David said the Lord said to my master, sit here on my right..’ This means Jesus (Messiah) is greater than David.

- **ON OFFERING AND ON THE END OF THE WORLD (Luke 21: 1-4)**

Jesus praised the widow for her offering since; she gave everything to God even the money she could have used to buy food. This was in comparison with the Pharisees who were giving out of abundance.

Some of the disciples commented on the beauty of Jerusalem Temple. This prompted Jesus to narrate the time when the temple will be destroyed (not a stone will be left in its place). The disciples wanted to know the exact date, but they were told that they should be on their guard because many things will happen before destruction such as, **wars among kingdoms, strange signs would happen at the sun, moon and the stars, terrible earthquake will occur, false messiahs, will rise up famine, plagues. Many disciples/followers of Jesus will be arrested, tried in a synagogue and put them in prison for the sake of Jesus, family and close friends will betray each other** i.e. parents handing over their children. (Acts 12: 1-3/16:22ff) The disciples will be hated by many people. This will be the time when the Temple will be surrounded by the army. At last the son of man would appear to the world in glory and power.

The predictions of Jesus concerning his suffering and death

(LK 9:21-22); (LK 9: 43-45); (LK 18:31-34).

For the first time after Peter had confessed that Jesus was the Messiah Jesus predicted that the ‘Son of man must suffer much be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the Law. He will be put to death,

⁷¹ The question was like this:

1. Moses wrote the following law for us’
2. If a man dies and leaves a wife without children that man’s brothers must marry the widow
3. The reason is to have children that will be considered as the dead man’s children
4. once there were seven brothers
5. the eldest got married and died without having children
6. then the second one married a woman and the third
7. the same thing happened to all the seven
8. they all died without having children
9. last of all the woman died
10. now on the day of resurrection whose wife will she be?

⁷² C.f Tobit 6:14-15/

⁷³ 1. The men and women of this age marry
2.but the men and women who are worthy to rise from death and live in the age to come will not marry
3.they will be like angels and cannot die
4. they are like the children of God because they have risen from death...

but three days later, he will be raised to new life. But he put strict orders that he should not tell anyone about this. (**LK 9:21-22**).

For the second time, he told his disciples about His death again. He told them that the Son of Man is going to be handed over to the power of human beings but his disciples did not understand what Jesus said. (**LK 9: 43-45**).

For the third time, Jesus told his disciples about his death. He told them that they were going to Jerusalem where everything that the prophets wrote about the son of man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the gentiles, who will mock him, insult him and spit on him. They will also whip him and kill him, but on the third day he will rise again. Still the disciples did not understand what he said to them. (**LK 18:31-34**).

THE PASSOVER FEAST

THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST/THE HOLY WEEK

It is called the '**Passion Week**' because this was the week in which Jesus met great opposition from his enemies then, Jesus was arrested, tortured, flogged and condemned to death on the cross. It is also called the '**Holy week**' because Christians remember that through the death of Jesus, the world was saved.

Jerusalem at Passover season was the delight of the Jews and the despair of the Romans. Thousands of devout Jews from all over the world arrived in the Holy City, their hearts filled with excitement and nationalistic fervor. The population of Jerusalem tripled during this feast, making it necessary for the Roman military units to be on special alert. They lived with the possibility that some enthusiastic Jewish Zealot might try to kill a Roman official or incite a riot, and there was always potential for disputes among the various Jewish religious groups.

Into this situation came Jesus with less than a week remaining before He would be crucified outside the city walls. On the road Jesus took, a traveler would arrive first at **Bethany** and then come to **Bethphage**, about two miles from Jerusalem. The elevation at this point makes one to view the Holy City.

The Lord permitted His followers to give him a public demonstration in His honor which is known as **the triumph entry into Jerusalem**. Jesus sent two of His disciples to Bethphage to get the colt (donkey) that He needed for the event. The disciples were told that if anyone asked them why they were untying the donkey, they had to answer that the Lord wants it and will bring it back.

Jesus rode on the donkey as he was entering Jerusalem. People spread their garments on the road and others took branches of trees and spreading them on the road (C.F 2 Kings 9:13)/ Psalm 118:25–26. People were shouting, '*Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord...Hosanna in the highest.*'

PALM SUNDAY

Triumph entry into Jerusalem (19: 28-40)

Why Jesus used a colt/donkey?

1. **It symbolized humility**
2. **He was fulfilling the prophecy of Prophet Zechariah(9:9)-** '*Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Look! Your king is coming to you: he is legitimate and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey*'. By riding on the donkey, He declared Himself to be Israel's King and Messiah. Hence, he deliberately challenged the religious leaders. This set

in motion the official plot that led to His arrest, trial, and crucifixion. The Jewish leaders had decided not to arrest Him during the feast.

3. **To show that he has come to bring peace and not war.** Jesus used a donkey not a horse which is an animal which is used in battle field; hence, he was not a military Messiah as the Jews expected.

How did His entry fulfill OT prophecies?

- he rode on a donkey as prophesied by Zechariah.⁷⁴
- people shouted as prophesied by Zechariah.
- he entered in Jerusalem in a humble way.

Significance of using a donkey:

- it meant Jesus was coming in peace.
- Jesus is the king of peace.

Significance of laying of cloaks:

- symbol of loyalty.
- symbol of king's enthronement.

Why Jesus wept over Jerusalem?

After entering Jerusalem Jesus wept over Jerusalem. WHY?

- the enemies would come and surround the city.*
- all inhabitants would be killed and the city destroyed.*⁷⁵

Cleansing of the temple (vv 45-48)

Gentiles were allowed to pray in the court of gentiles but priests in charge of the temple did not respect this place. How?

- i. They used it as a market square to sell spotless or blameless animals fit for sacrifice.
- ii. They used it as a bank for foreign exchange: unclean money was changed to clean Jewish money in order to pay temple tax.
- iii. The Court of gentiles was also used as shortcut to get into the court of Israelites.

Reasons that made Jesus drive merchants out of the Temple:

1. The animals created a smelly and messy atmosphere in the temple.
2. It was a metaphorical cleansing, because Jesus wanted to symbolize that the Holy God needs to be worshipped in a clean place.
3. Jesus wanted the Gentiles also to worship God comfortably but the benches and the animal pens were inconveniences to them.
4. The money changers took advantage of people and overcharged them which was stealing.

NB: When he was cleansing the temple, he quoted 2 OT prophecies:

⁷⁴ Zechariah. 9:9- Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Look! Your king is coming to you: he is legitimate and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey on a young donkey, the foal of a female donkey.

⁷⁵ This event occurred in 70 AD by King Felix, whose commander was.....

-he accused the people for *making the temple a hideout for thieves (Jeremiah 7:11)*, instead of
 -*making the temple a house for prayer (Isaiah 56:7)*.

MONDAY-WEDNESDAY

On these days, Jesus evaded many traps set by the **chief priests, Pharisees, scribes and the elders**.

The Question about the authority of Jesus (20: 1-8)

The question was '*tell us what right do you have to do these things? Who gave you this right?*' The above groups wanted to know why

- **Jesus rode into Jerusalem in a triumph way,**
- **taught inside the temple without their permission and**
- **Chased the people out of the temple.**⁷⁶

Actually they wanted to hear bluntly that was he the Messiah and that Son of God. If so Jesus could have been accused of blasphemy. Instead, Jesus questioned where John the Baptist got his the authority, whether from God or from men. **The groups failed to answer because:**

1. *To say that John's authority came from men, they could have been stoned by the crowd who believed that His authority came from God.*
2. *Again, to say that his authority came from God, they could have been asked why then they did not believe God. So fear of being cornered by Jesus, they said they do not know.* Jesus too did not give an answer why he is doing all these things because his hour had not yet come.

The question about paying taxes (20:19-26)

The scribes and chief priests bribed others to trap Jesus with a question: *whether it was lawful for the Jews to pay tax to the Romans.*

Why the question was tricky? Because:

A 'Yes' answer would have made people to desert Jesus, because he could have been taken as a collaborator of the Romans. Again, a 'NO' answer could have led Jesus to be arrested since; he could have been taken as a political rebel.

But Jesus evaded the trap by saying '*pay what belongs to the emperor and pay God what belongs to God*' the people were **quite** and were **amazed** at this answer.⁷⁷

The question about resurrection /rising from death (20: 27-40)

The **Sadducees** who did not believe in life after death wanted to trap Jesus and refute his teachings on life after death⁷⁸. The dilemma of the question was who will be the owner of the woman at resurrection, since

⁷⁶ The question was trick because to be the Messiah, Jesus could have been arrested and if he could have said he had no special authority, they could have told him to obey their orders, since, they were the most powerful religious body in Israel, second to God.

⁷⁷ Jesus indicated that both Caesar and God have their rights and what is given to them is not a gift but the payment of a debt.

⁷⁸ The question was like this:

11. Moses wrote the following law for us'
12. If a man dies and leaves a wife without children that man's brothers must marry the widow
13. The reason is to have children that will be considered as the dead man's children
14. once there were seven brothers
15. the eldest got married and died without having children
16. then the second one married a woman and the third
17. the same thing happened to all the seven
18. they all died without having children
19. last of all the woman died
20. now on the day of resurrection whose wife will she be?

all the 7 men married her.⁷⁹ Jesus said at resurrection people will be like angels⁸⁰. He proved that God is a God of the living not dead by citing the calling of Moses that God revealed to Moses that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (**Ex.3:1-6**)

Teaching about true and false piety (20: 45-21:4)

False piety of the scribes

- they walked about in their long robes
- they loved to be greeted with respect in their market place
- they chose the reserved seats in the synagogues and the best places at feasts
- they took advantage of widows and rob their homes
- they made a show off by saying long prayers
- they made a show off by giving a lot but out of abundance.

True piety of the widow

- though poor the widow gave all what she had
- she was humble
- she showed great need of God.

The teaching on the end of days/end times (LK 21: 5-24)

Some of the disciples commented on the beauty of Jerusalem Temple. This prompted Jesus to narrate the time when the temple will be destroyed (not a stone will be left in its place). The disciples wanted to know the exact date, but they were told that they should be on their guard because many things will happen before destruction such as, wars among kingdoms, terrible earthquake, famine, plagues. Many disciples/followers of Jesus will be arrested, tried in a synagogue and put them in prison for the sake of Jesus. (Acts 12: 1-3/16:22ff) The disciples will be hated by many people. This will be the time when the Temple will be surrounded by the army.

Thursday

The betrayal: The plot to kill Jesus (LK 22:1-6)

The time for the feast of unleavened bread (Passover) was near. **The chief priest** and the **teachers of the law** desired to arrest Jesus but they were afraid of the people so they were trying to find ways of killing Jesus secretly. Jesus Iscariot went to the chief priest and the officers of the temple guard and discussed how he could betray Jesus. Judas was offered money to which he could betray Jesus when an opportune time has come.

Why Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus?

- He wanted Jesus to act quickly as a Messiah, since Jesus was not revolting against the Romans.⁸¹
- He smelt danger and thought that the betrayal would assure him of his protection, since; he had a service of the priests. (he wanted to side with the winning side for safety)
- He wanted money by tricking the priests. He thought Jesus would disappear by a miracle.

⁷⁹ C.f Tobit 6:14-15/

⁸⁰ 1. The men and women of this age marry
2.but the men and women who are worthy to rise from death and live in the age to come will not marry
3.they will be like angels and cannot die
4. they are like the children of God because they have risen from death...

⁸¹ He was ambitious; he hoped Jesus would defend himself if they tried to arrest him

-he thought Jesus would defend himself.

-Satan entered him.

Preparation for the last supper (22: 7-13)

Peter and John were sent into a city and followed a man who carried the jar of water and this man will show them the room for the Passover. **Jesus wanted to have a Passover in secret** because:

-*he wanted to prevent Jesus' enemies from knowing his whereabouts.*

-*to have special attention with his apostles.*

-*to avoid disturbances from those who still need him.*

The Passover lamb was supposed not to have any blemish, and then slain in the temple precincts and the supper eaten within the Jerusalem city limits. For the Jews, the Passover feast was the memorial of a past victory, but Jesus would institute a new supper that would be the memorial of His death.

On this day, Jesus sent two disciples into the city and were told to follow the man who will carry a jar of water who will show them the room where they will celebrate the supper. Since for the Jews the new day began with sundown, it would be Friday when Jesus and His disciples met in the Upper Room. This was His last Passover, and on that day, He would fulfill the Passover by dying on the cross as the spotless Lamb of God (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Peter 2:21-24).

The last supper and how was it held?

The original Passover feast consisted of the roasted lamb, the unleavened bread, and the dish of bitter herbs (Ex. 12:8-20). The lamb reminded the Jews of the blood that was applied to the doorposts in Egypt to keep the angel of death from slaying their firstborn. The unleavened bread reminded them of their haste in leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:39), and the bitter herbs spoke of their suffering as Pharaoh's slaves. At the time of Jesus, the Jews had added to the ceremony the drinking of **four cups of wine** diluted with water:

1. After a solemn blessing, the **first cup** was drunk, followed by bitter herbs. Then someone read the Passover story from Exodus 12, Psalm 11 (the little Hallel) was sung.
2. Then the **second cup** was drunk. Then came the main meal of lamb and unleavened bread.
3. After this came the **third cup**, the 'cup of blessing' was drunk. Finally, Psalms 114-118 (the 'Great Hallel') were sung,
4. And the Passover came to its climax when the **fourth cup**, the 'cup of consummation,' was drunk.

In summary

-a lamb was roasted and its blood smeared on the door post.

-it was eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.

-A song was sung.

-cup of wine were present

This is the way Jesus and his disciples would have celebrated the Passover. However, the change came at the **third cup**. Jesus did something that was hard for the disciples to understand at that time.

LK 22:17-20:

Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took bread, and after giving thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance

of me." And in the same way he took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

Here was the third cup, the 'cup of blessing,' but Jesus said that the bread and wine were his body and blood. "Blood of the Covenant" was a quotation from **Exodus 24: 8**, a passage that all the disciples would have recognized: it referred to the ratification of the covenant between God and Israel. Jesus talks as though he is introducing a new covenant, one that will be ratified with his own blood.

During the supper, Jesus revealed that one of them will betray him (vv22-23.) This statement prompted the disciples to asking themselves who it was that will betray him.

Jesus in Gethsemane and how was Jesus tempted? (22:39-46)

The Devil suggested to him to change his father's plan of suffering and drying (vv 42-44).

Jesus as a human being was afraid to face suffering and death⁸². However, he accepted the will of his Father.

The arrest of Jesus in Gethsemane (vv 47-53)

Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Peter in trying to defend Jesus by cutting off the ear of the servant of the high-priest, whose name was **Malchus**. Jesus did not resist his arrest. He was taken to the house of high priest.

NB: The fact that Judas brought such a large group of armed men is evidence that neither he nor the religious leaders really understood Jesus. They thought that Jesus would try to escape, or that His followers would put up a fight, or that perhaps He might do a miracle. Our Lord's words in Mark 14:49 were proof that He was in control, for they could have arrested Him many times earlier, except that His hour had not yet come.

NB: the arrangement of religious authorities with Judas Iscariot arrest Jesus was good because Jesus would be arrested in absentia of the crowd who would have attacked religious authorities.

How Peter denied Jesus:

- Jesus was arrested and taken away into the house of the High Priest.
- Peter followed at a distance.
- He joined those sitting round the fire.
- A servant woman saw him and said he was with Jesus.
- Peter denied that he never knew Jesus.
- After a while a man noticed him and said he was one of them too.
- Peter answered that he was not.
- After about an hour, another man insisted strongly that Peter was with Jesus since he was a Galilean.
- Peter answered that he did not know what the man was talking about.
- While he was still speaking, the cock crowed.
- Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter.
- Peter remembered what Jesus had said.
- He went out and wept bitterly

NB: the cry of Peter after realized that he has denied Jesus indicated a sign of repentance.

⁸² This is shown in the way he was crying in the desert, '*Remove the cup of suffering from me...*'

Reasons why Peter denied Jesus:

1. He was not confident enough in Jesus and his protection.
2. He was angry and disappointed that Jesus had not resisted during his arrest.
3. He did not recall Jesus' saying about persecution on account of the Son of man therefore he was afraid of being killed.
4. He did not pray enough in Gethsemane .i.e. he was sleeping instead of praying.

The trials of Jesus of Jesus were THREE: (22:66-71; 23: 6-12)

- A)-before the **Sanhedrin** (Jewish council)⁸³- *Friday morning*
- B)-before the Roman Governor-**Pontius Pilate**.-*Friday morning*.
- C)-before **Herod Antipas**. -- *Friday morning*.

Before the Sanhedrin, Jesus was asked (accused) whether he was

- The **Messiah** or
- Whether *he was the Son of God*
- He was accused of admitting that he was the Son of God.
- he was accused of blasphemy⁸⁴ because he said he was the Son of God.

How did Jesus respond to the council's accusations?

- if I tell you will not believe.
- and if I ask you a question, you will not answer me.
- but from now the Son of man will be seated on the right hand of Almighty God.

Why the council did not stone Jesus instead they brought Jesus before the Roman governor, Pilate (blasphemy was punishable by death through stoning)-reasons why the case of Jesus was presented before the Roman Governor?

- the Roman governor had to sign for any person to be killed
- the council wanted a stiffer punishment to Jesus such as crucifixion to prove that he was not the Messiah.

NB: the men who were guarding Jesus over the night mocked Jesus How?

- They beat him
- Insulted him

CHAPTER 23**Before Pontius Pilate, Jesus was accused of (23: 1-5)**

- Misleading the Jews.*
- For starting a riot.*
- Forbidding people from paying tax to Caesar.*

⁸³ According to the Talmudic sources, including the tractate *Sanhedrin*, the Great Sanhedrin was a court of 71 sages that met on different occasion i.e to try a high priest, a false prophet, a rebellious elder, or an errant tribe. Religiously, it supervised certain rituals, including the Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) liturgy.

⁸⁴ irreverence toward a deity or deities and, by extension, the use of profanity or disrespect for God or sacred things

-claiming to be the King, (which was treason case)

NB: Before Pilate Jesus answered him by saying “**you say so**”

Then Pontius sent Jesus to Herod WHY?

- ✓ He wanted to get rid of the case because he saw that Jesus was innocent.

How did Herod and his soldiers mock/treat Jesus? 23:6-12)

-they put a fine robe on him.

-they mocked him

-they treated him with contempt.

Jesus did not answer any question from Herod Antipas. **WHY?** Because: Herod regarded Jesus as a magician, a wonder worker. Then **Herod sent** him back to Pontius Pilate, meaning he saw that Jesus was innocent.

Jesus is sentenced to death. (23:13-25)

When Jesus was brought before Pilate for the second time, Pilate told the chief priests, ***the leaders and the people that neither he nor Herod found Jesus guilty of*** any offense they were accusing him of. Pilate said that Jesus did not deserve death and he ruled that he should be whipped and set free. The chief priests and the people were not happy with the decision made by the Roman Governor, Pilate.

Ways in which Pontius Pilate tried to save Jesus (Luke 23: 4, 13-16, 22)

- He told the people that Jesus should be whipped and be let go.
- He told the people that both he and Herod found Jesus innocent.
- Pilate appealed to the crowd two times for them to change their mind in favor of Jesus.

Why did Pilate become suspicious of Jesus' accusers?

- It was strange for Jews to accuse their fellow Jew of being against Roman rule since; all the Jews were hating the Romans.
- He knew that the Jewish leaders were jealous of Jesus.

Why Pilate was in dilemma to judge the case of Jesus?

- Letting Jesus go would have caused a rebellion by the Jews, hence, risking his job.
- Again, condemning Jesus would be against the Roman law as he was innocent of any crime against the state, so if the Emperor discovered this, he could also be dismissed.

The Jews demanded that **Barabbas** be released. Ironically, Barabbas was accused of treason, the same case Jesus was accused of. Pilate tried to rid off the responsibility of shedding blood of an innocent person by washing hands.

Why Pilate finally bow down to the demand of the Jews though he knew that Jesus was innocent?⁸⁵

-setting the Jesus free would have caused unrest in Palestine, hence, rioting.

-he feared that he might lose his job if the Jews lodged a complaint against him at Rome that he is the friend of a rebel.

-to satisfy the people, hence, maintaining peace.

⁸⁵ Pilate knew very well that Jesus is innocent and that he does not deserve to die.

On the way to **Golgotha Simon of Cyrene**. *The soldiers placed the cross on his back and made him to carry behind Jesus.* In short, the soldiers, forced Simon to carry the cross beam of Jesus up to Golgotha. A large number of people were following Jesus and among them were some women who were weeping and wailing for him.

What did Jesus say to those women who were weeping for him?

- Women of Jerusalem! Do not cry for me.
- But for yourselves and your children
- For the days are coming when people will say; how lucky are women who had never had children, who never bore babies before, who never nursed them.
- That will be the time when people will say to mountains, fall on us.
- And to the hill hide us

CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS (23: 26-49)

Crucifixion was an important method of capital punishment, particularly among the Persians, Seleucids, Carthaginians, and the **Romans** from about the 6th century BC to the 4th century AD. The condemned man, after being whipped, or “scourged,” dragged the crossbeam of his cross to the place of punishment, where the upright shaft was already fixed in the ground. Stripped of his clothing either then or earlier at his scourging, he was bound fast with outstretched arms to the crossbeam or nailed firmly to it through the wrists.

The crossbeam was then raised high against the upright shaft and made fast to it about 9 to 12 feet (approximately 3 metres) from the ground. Next, the feet were tightly bound or nailed to the upright shaft. A ledge inserted about halfway up the upright shaft gave some support to the body; evidence for a similar ledge for the feet is rare and late. Over the criminal's head was placed a notice stating his name and his crime. Death, apparently caused by exhaustion or by heart failure, could be hastened by shattering the legs (*crurifragium*) with an iron club, so that shock and asphyxiation soon ended his life. Crucifixion was most frequently used to punish political or religious agitators, pirates, slaves, or those who had no civil rights.

At the place of execution Jesus was stripped and then nailed to the cross, at least nailed by his hands; and above him at the top of the cross was placed the condemnatory inscription stating his crime of professing to be King of the Jews. (The Gospels differ slightly in the wording but agree that the inscription was in “**Hebrew**,” or Aramaic, as well as **Latin** and **Greek**.) On the cross Jesus hung for **three hours of agony**. He spoke the last 7 words before dying⁸⁶.

How was Jesus mocked while on the cross?

- A) **Jewish leaders**
 - They jeered at him, telling him to save himself for saved others.
- B) **The soldiers**
 - they offered him cheap wine
 - they told him to save himself if he was the king of the Jews.
- C) **One of the criminals**
 - he told him that as he was the Messiah, he should save himself and the m too.

⁸⁶ Lk 23:34/23:43/Jn 19:26-27/Mt 27:46/Jn 19:28/19:30/Lk 23:46

At twelve o'clock the sun stopped shining and **the darkness** covered the whole country until 3 O'clock P.M when Jesus died. The **curtain** of the Temple was **torn into two**.

The meaning of darkness

- It was a symbol of universal judgment on both the Jews and the gentiles. (Amos 8:9/Joel 2:2/Zeph 1:15)
- It signifies that man will be judged according to his attitude towards Jesus.

Meaning of the tearing of the curtain

- It marked the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament.
- The barriers between the Jews and the gentiles is demolished, they are no longer separated as clean and unclean.
- The holy of holies is open and all have a direct access to Jesus.
- The Jewish way of worshipping God and the time of the temple was over.

Crucified on either side of Jesus were two convicted thieves, whom the soldiers dispatched at eventide by breaking their legs. The soldiers found Jesus already dead; but, to be certain, one of them drove a spear into his side, from which poured blood and water. He was taken down before sunset (in deference to Jewish custom) and buried in a rock-hewn tomb.

The burial of Jesus (vv50-56)

A man named **Joseph of Arimathea** did a great role during Jesus' burial. **Who was this man?**

- Was a good and honorable man.
- Was waiting for the coming of the kingdom of God.
- Was a member of the council (Sanhedrin)
- He did not agree with the decision of the council to have Jesus crucified.
- Was the secret disciple of Jesus.

The role played by Joseph of Arimathea on Jesus' burial

- Went to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus.
- Had money to buy burial place for Jesus.

The body was put in a tomb which had been dug out of solid rock. The body was not embalmed as the Sabbath was near, so some women decided to do so as soon as possible after the Sabbath.

Jewish burial procedure

- washing the body.
- anointing the body with ointment i.e. spices, myrrh, aloes.
- wrapping the corpse in grave clothes.
- laying the body in a cave/normal grave.

Chapter 24.

THE RESURRECTION- (Sunday morning)- (1-11)

Resurrection in a strict sense means, '*coming back to life with a glorified body*'. **Three women**⁸⁷ on Sunday morning carried **spices** to anoint the body of Jesus. The women were told by **2 men in bright shining**

⁸⁷ These are *Joana, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James*.

clothes that Jesus is alive. He reminded them to remember what he told them while he was in Galilee.
'The son of man must be handed over to sinners be crucified and three days later rise to life.'

Reaction of the disciples to the news that Jesus had risen

- they thought that what the women were saying was nonsense
- they did not believe them
- Peter rushed to the tomb to see for himself

Why the disciples were unwilling to believe the report from the women about the resurrection?

- the testimony of women had no value in the Jewish society.
- they had forgotten Jesus' prediction about his death and resurrection.
- they had completely given up hope in Jesus since, it was the third day since, Jesus had died.
- they did not understand the OT scripture that the Messiah would suffer and enter into God's glory.
- they wanted a personal experience as a proof.
- none of the disciples observed the resurrection.

APPEARANCE OF THE RISEN JESUS (24: 13-35)

Firstly it seemed that the body of Jesus did not look exactly as he died. Secondly, the body of Jesus though transformed, was the real physical body:

The body of Jesus did not look exactly as he died before. This statement can be proved to be true because of the failure of some of the disciples to recognize him immediately. For example, the two disciples who were going to Emmaus failed to recognize Jesus (Luke 24:16ff). Lastly, when Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples, they were startled and frightened (Luke 24:33). On the other hand, the disciples recognized Jesus fairly quickly (Matthew 28:9). This can mean that there was a considerable degree of continuity between the physical appearance of Jesus before his death and after his death.

Though transformed, the body of Jesus was a physical one. The raised Jesus had a transformed body but it was still a physical body. This is evident in the following events; firstly, his body could be touched and handled

Proofs that Jesus rose from dead are as follows:

- Women found the tomb stone rolled away and were told by the angels that Jesus had risen (Luke 24: 2-4)
- Peter proved by seeing the lines wrappings of Jesus' dead body.(Lk 24: 12)
- Jesus appeared to the disciples who were going to Emmaus. (Luke 24: 13-37)
- Jesus appeared to the 12 disciples in Jerusalem. (Luke 24: 36-44)
- On his ascension everyone saw him as he got lifted and went to heaven. (Luke 24: 50-53)

Jesus appeared to two disciples (*Creopas and his friend*) who were going to Emmaus⁸⁸.

The conversation between Jesus and these two disciples

- the two disciples were going to Emmaus*
- they were talking about what had happened to Jesus*
- Jesus drew near them and walked along them*
- they saw him but could not recognize him*
- Jesus asked them what they were talking about*

⁸⁸ Emmaus was 16 km from Jerusalem.

-Creopas asked him if he is the only visitor in Jerusalem who did not know the things that had in the few days ago.

-Jesus asked what things and they answered that the things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth...

The two recognized Jesus as he broke the bread. But Jesus vanished.

The disciples failed to recognize Jesus because:

-their senses were supernaturally dulled.

-they had completely given up hope in Jesus.

-they did not expect that Jesus who was dead could be alive.

-Jesus might have looked different from the way he had looked the morning of his death.

-they failed to learn from the scriptures that in God's plan that the Messiah should suffer in order to enter his glory.

Jesus opened up their mind to understand the OT scriptures. These two recognized Jesus as Jesus broke the bread at the table. Immediately, Jesus vanished from their site. These two returned the same evening to Jerusalem to narrate that they have met Jesus. As these two were explaining to them Jesus suddenly stood among them giving them peace, saying 'peace be with you'. They were afraid thinking that they were seeing a ghost, but he told them not to be alarmed and doubt. Jesus proved to his disciples beyond reasonable doubts that he was alive by telling them to look at his hands and feet, and told them to give him something to eat. Later he explained what the scriptures had said about him; then their eyes were opened to understand the scriptures.

Was Jesus body really physical? 'YES' How? BECAUSE:

-He showed them the wounds.

-he asked them to feel that he had flesh and bones.

-he asked for something to eat.

The ascension (24: 50-53)

Ascension is the going up of Jesus into heaven. According to the first chapter of **The Acts of the Apostles (1: 6-11)**, after appearing to the Apostles on various occasions during a period of 40 days, Jesus blessed the disciples and was taken up in their presence and was then hidden from them by a cloud.

ACTS OF APOSTLES

The Book is called acts because it reports the **activities (acts)** or the **deeds** done by the apostles after Jesus went to heaven. This is also the time when the Roman rule was almost everywhere including Europe and Asia. Though it was the Roman Empire, many people adopted Greek culture (They were Hellenist).

Factors that influenced the fast spread of Christianity.

- Pax Romana which helped preachers to evangelize without fear.
- Persecutions of the believers also helped in spreading the faith. This is so because as believers were running away from Jerusalem, they preached the good news wherever they went.
- Good roads that the Romans had.
- Greek language which enabled the evangelists to communicate easily to people in the Roman Empire.
- Good examples set by Christians brought security to many people.

WHO WROTE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES? (THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK)

Acts was written by the same author of the Gospel of Luke, therefore **Luke** wrote two books,

Proofs/evidence to show that Luke and Acts were written by one author (Luke)

- ✓ Both books were dedicated to 'Theophilus' (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1).
 - Theophilus means **Lover of God** (God's friend). Theophilus is not the name of a person but a certain high ranking official in the Roman Government who loved God. Therefore, Luke dedicated to this high ranking official so that he should influence his friends in the Roman government to consider Christianity as not seditious as some thought.
 - ✓ Introduction of acts refers to his first book of Luke (Acts 1: 1)
 - ✓ In Acts Luke was accompanying some missionaries as he uses 'we' in some passages (Acts 16: 10-17; 20: 5ff)
 - ✓ Both books show the same interest such as universalism, the Holy Spirit, Prayer.
 - ✓ Both books showed that the Roman authorities saw no wrong in Jesus activities or those of church.⁸⁹
- Purpose of the Acts of Apostles**
- ✓ To encourage those who had believed in Jesus to continue in faith. As the power of the Holy Spirit was effective in Jesus' believers.
 - ✓ To show the promise of the Holy Spirit working in the spread of Christianity.
 - ✓ To show that Christianity is for both Jews and Gentiles.
 - ✓ To show that Christianity was not rebellious to the Romans.⁹⁰
 - ✓ To show how Christianity spread from Jerusalem to Rome just like Jesus said, '*you shall be will be witnesses in Jerusalem....and to the farthest end of the world...*' (Acts 1: 8)

The approach to Acts is **thematic**, we are given **nine themes**. A **theme** is the main lesson or the gist of the author's interest. It is the central idea of the story or the heart of the story. The purpose of the thematic approach is to familiarize ourselves with the main themes of the book. These themes are found in each chapter of the Book of Acts. Time should also be spent in the teaching of the contents of Acts. Such a study, of course, will help to understand the themes.

Nine Themes in the book of Acts of Apostles

(Teachings of Acts)

1. **God saves people/mankind through Jesus**-to be 'saved' means, to be delivered from sin and its consequences. Salvation can be *physical or spiritual*. Through preaching people got healed and being converted, hence, in the saving act, God and the apostles uses the name of Jesus. In this way, people repent their sins and have faith and trust in Jesus. Therefore. Jesus is the channel of salvation.
NB: physical salvation is when one is healed from diseases or when evil spirits are removed from the body. Whereas, spiritual salvation, is when one accepts Jesus as his/her savior and live righteously before God after the apostles have preached to them.
2. **Jesus works through the Holy Spirit**- Here the Spirit of the Lord gave the apostles to do special power to do certain activities. In other words, the work of Jesus is continued through the power of the Holy Spirit i.e. The Holy Spirit enables the apostles to proclaim and do miracles (Acts 1:8)⁹¹.
3. **Jesus uses the church as an instrument of salvation**-the church is the community of believers who belong to God. Jesus uses these believers to extend his salvation to others through preaching so as to bring others into God's kingdom. Example, Peter's speech during Pentecost-(Acts 2:40-41)⁹²

⁸⁹ Luke was a travelling companion of Paul

⁹⁰ The apologetic purpose was needed because Christianity started with the hand cap that its founder had died as condemned criminal under a Roman government and wherever Christianity spread, disturbances resulted.

⁹¹⁹² John 16:7-8 But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I am going away. For if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. **Mark 16:17-18** These signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new languages; they will pick up snakes with their hands, and whatever poison they drink will not harm them; they will place their hands on the sick and they will be well."

⁹² With many other words he testified and exhorted them saying, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation!" 2:41 So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added.

4. **The power of the Holy Spirit is irresistible-** No one can prevent or stop the gospel to be preached. Hence, the gospel spreads despite the Romans/ gentiles attempting to stop it, since, the Holy Spirit is behind the activities of the apostles/ believers (the Holy Spirit is the driving power) (Acts 5:40-42)⁹³.
5. **The Holy Spirit guides the church**-Some of the choices, decisions, and directions to take were given by the Holy Spirit. This comes in forms such as:
 - The Holy Spirit guided the apostles on the choice of the leaders. I.e. the Holy Spirit guides the church in the choice of leaders (Acts 10:19-32/16:6-8).
 - The Holt Spirit directed the activities of the apostles; what to do and where to go to evangelize.
6. **The church shares in the suffering of Jesus-** The church acts as the suffering servant. The church will experience persecution in the work of preaching of the gospel. Such as being whipped, imprisoned, rejected and even killed in their mission of spreading the good news. I.e. the stoning of Stephen.
7. **Prayer is vital in the life of the church**-prayers assist the believers in many ways. I.e. when carrying out serious decisions such as before choosing the leaders, when going out for missionary work. Prayers nourish the church and keep the church going (Acts 12:4-5)/ (Acts 1:24).
8. **The mission of the church is first to the Jews, then to the gentiles (the universality of the mission)-** the order of salvation is first to the Jews before the gentiles, because, God chose the Jews to be the light to the nations. Universalism is seen when the believers went to gentile land to preach. i.e (Acts 1:18), (Acts 8:26/15:3).
9. **The authors' sympathy for the Romans**-The writer of Acts/Luke tried to portray the Romans as good people, kind towards the believers. i.e. *Sergius Paulus* in Cyprus (Acts 13:6-8), *Cornelius* in Caesarea (Acts 10:1-5), *Festus* in Acts 25:4-5, refused to send Paul to Jerusalem for fear that Paul would be killed. By showing sympathy for the Romans, the Roman readers of Acts might be attracted to the faith and accept it, like some had done already: i.e *Cornelius (in Caesarea)*, *Sergius Paulus (in Cyprus)*, *the jailor (in Philippi)*. In general, some Roman leaders did not see anything wrong in the teaching of the apostles.

CHAPTER 1

Information notes of chapter 1:1-11

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his apostles. He told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit promised by his Father. During his last appearance, Jesus ordered his apostles to be his witnesses in the whole world. Jesus took his disciples to Mt Olives where he ascended to heaven. While praying in Jerusalem, after Jesus` Ascension, the apostles and the 1st Christians, guided by peter, chose Mathias to replace Judas as one of the Twelve.

Why did the apostles ask Jesus whether 'he will establish the kingdom of Israel... ' (v6)/what was the attitude of the disciples on the Messiah

- ✓ They had wrong expectations of the messiah: they thought the Messiah will defeat the Romans.
- ✓ They expected the messiah to liberate Israel from the Romans, and then establish the monarch of David.
- ✓ They expected messiah to make Israel a super power, hence he will bring peace and prosperity.
- ✓ They had not understood the teaching of Jesus on the Messiah
- ✓ They thought that the Messiah will prove that there is one God of Israel so that all the gentiles will worship in Jerusalem.

The answer of Jesus to the question

-the time and occasions are set by my father's own authority

⁹³ And they summoned the apostles and had them beaten. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. 5:41 So they left the council rejoicing because they had been considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name. 5:42 And every day both in the temple courts and from house to house, they did not stop teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus was the Christ.

-and it is not for you to know when they will be
 -but when the Holy Spirit comes upon you will be filled with power
 -and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth

NB: Jesus was taken up to heaven and the crowd hid him then the **two men** dressed in white said to the apostles:

*-Galileans why are you standing there looking up at the sky?
 -Jesus will come back in the way that you saw him go to heaven*

Judas successor (v 12-26)

Peter's speech at Judas replacement

- Judas' place in the ministry is vacant.
- This was foretold by scriptures.
- Someone must replace Judas.
- He must have been in Jesus' company from the time of baptism by John.
- Until the ascension and be a witness that Jesus is risen.

Four qualities were needed for a candidate to be chosen as a successor of **Judas Iscariot**:

- One who has been there when John was baptizing people.*
- One who has travelled with apostles when Jesus was with them.*
- should be the witness of the resurrection of Jesus.*
- should be a witness of Jesus' ascension.*

Two names were proposed (by 120 believers): **Joseph** (Barsabas or Justus) and **Matthias**. The believers after praying and casting lot they chose **Matthias** to replace Judas Iscariot

THEMES:

1. The Holy Spirit guides the church –Mathias was chosen through *drawing of Lot* and Barabbas was not
2. Importance of prayer in the life of the church. The apostle *prayed* before casting the lot

Chapter 2 The birth of the church

Information notes of chapter 2:

As promised by Jesus and God, the Holy Spirit came down on the 1st Christians *on the day of Pentecost* and they began to speak in different languages. In his 2nd speech, Peter, quoting the OT, explains the meaning of this event of speaking in tongues. He insists on the truth that Jesus is the Messiah. Although crucified, Jesus rose from the dead. If the Jews believe in Jesus, are baptized in his Name and repent of their sins, they can be saved.

The 1st Christians spent their time listening to the apostles, teaching and praying. They also shared the possessions out of mutual love.

The coming of the Holy Spirit: the Day of Pentecost (VV1-42)

Pentecost- Pentecost from Greek: ‘*pentekosteē*, which means “50th day.” As a feast it falls on the 50th day after Passover. Pentecost was a thanksgiving for the first fruits of the wheat harvest. It was also called **Harvest feast** but the rabbis associated it with remembrance **of the Law given by God for the Hebrews to Moses on Mount Sinai**. **Pentecost** was a second of the three Pilgrim Festivals of the Jewish religious calendar: this means many Jews were gathering in Jerusalem. During this feast the first fruits of the harvest were brought to the Temple, and two loaves of bread made from the new wheat were offered

Why the Jews gathered on the day of Pentecost

- ✓ To commemorate a harvest feast
- ✓ To commemorate the covenant made at Mt. Sinai

On this day the disciples were together in one house for they were afraid of the Jews. The Holy Spirit descended on the apostle in a form of tongues of fire.

What happened to the disciples on this day when the Holy Spirit was about to come?

- while the believers were gathered together
- there was noise and a strong wind filled the whole house
- they saw what looked like tongues of fire
- which spread and touched each person in the house
- they were filled with the Holy Spirit
- and began to talk in other languages

Reaction of the onlookers

The Diaspora Jews who had come gathered after hearing the noise they:

- they were amazed and confused because one of them heard the believers speaking in his or her language.(Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus Asia, Phrygia Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya near Cyrene, Rome, Cretans and Arabs)
- others made fun of them saying they were drunk.

Peter defended the action of his believers by quoting OT passages that foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit. Peter said:

- we are not drunk but this is the outpouring of the spirit as foretold by Prophet Joel about the end times
- Jesus did mighty works
- that were the signs that he came from God, yet you had him killed.
- God raised him up. ...
- we are witnesses of his resurrection...
- Jesus shares in the power of God, he is the messiah, he sent the holy Spirit what you now hear and see is his power.
- Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit...

How the people responded after Peter' speech at Pentecost?

- They were deeply troubled
- They asked Peter what they could do.
- Many people believed the message of Peter
- And were baptized
- on this day **3000 people** became believers

In summary:

- Peter explained the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel
- He explained evidence of Jesus as the Christ.
- He appealed for belief in Christ.

The appeal made 3000 people to become believers. A new fellowship of believers was established known as the birth of early church.

- Themes**
1. Jesus works through the Holy Spirit
 2. Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation
 4. The power of the Holy Spirit is irresistible.

Life among the early believers (2:43-47; 4: 32-37)

- ✓ Lived in fellowship/prayers
- ✓ Shared their belongings
- ✓ Had meals together in homes
- ✓ Miracles and wonders were done through the apostles

- ✓ Everyone was filled with awe
- ✓ They would sell their property and possessions
- ✓ Distributed the money among all according to need
- ✓ They met as a group day after day in the Temple
- ✓ Eating with gladness and humble hearts
- ✓ Praising God
- ✓ Enjoying the goodwill of all the people.

Theme: the importance of prayer in the life of the church.

NB: In summary the work of the early church included:

- Praying.
- Performing miracles.
- Preaching.
- Sharing belongings.

: The church grew due to

- *preaching* and
- *miracles* made

the church spread due to *persecution*

The death of Ananias and Sapphira (5: 1-11)

Explanation

All Christians, we are told, loved one another and they shared their possession. For example: **Joseph**.

-This man was a Levite born in Cyprus

-he sold his corn field and gave the money to the apostles.

-The apostles called him Barnabas-

NB: The apostles gave him another name **Barnabas** because he was the one who *encouraged people* hence, the meaning of the name.

However not all of them were completely honest and frank. A certain couple – *Ananias and Saphira* – lies to Peter about the importance of their help to the poor and were punished by death. Their sin (a **deliberate offence against the unity of Christian Brotherhood for the sake of personnel advantages**) is a sin against the Holy Spirit.

The two couple sold their property but kept some money from the apostles. Peter accused them of committing a sin against the Holy Spirit. **Peter said to Ananias**

-*why did you let Satan take control of you and make you lie to the Holy Spirit*

-*why did you then decide to do such a thing*

-*you have not lied to human beings but to God.*

NB: Both of them died and the church was terrified

Theme: the power of the Holy Spirit is irresistible

How the needs of the believers were met

- Sharing of belongings
- Sold belongings and handed the money to the disciples
- Money distributed to families according to their needs

Chapter 3

Back ground information of chapter 3

One day, Peter and John, while in the Temple, heal a paralyzed man, and Peter speaks to the crowds attracted by the miracle. He tells them that miracle was performed by the power of Jesus, Crucified but

risen from the dead. Jesus suffered according to God's plan of salvation, and he is the only savior sent to all nations.

The healing of a lame man at a beautiful gate (3:1-10)

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time for prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. And a man lame from birth was being carried up, who was placed at the temple gate called "the Beautiful Gate" every day so he could beg for money from those going into the temple courts. The man was 40 years old. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple courts, he asked them for money. Peter looked directly at him (as did John) and said, "Look at us!" So the lame man paid attention to them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, stand up and walk!" Then Peter took hold of him by the right hand and raised him up, and at once the man's feet and ankles were made strong. 3:8 **He jumped up**, stood and began walking around, and he entered the temple courts with them, walking and **leaping and praising God**. All the people saw him walking and praising God, and they recognized him as the man who used to sit and ask for donations at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with astonishment and amazement at what had happened to him.

Theme 1 Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation

2 the importance of prayer in the church

Peter speech in the temple (vv11-26)

-*it is not us but the man's faith in Jesus which cures him.*

-*Pilate declared Jesus innocent but you had him killed. God raised him up and we are witnesses.*

-*you, the people, and rulers acted in ignorance, fulfilling the prophets*

-*repent and listen to Jesus*

-*God made a promise to you if you believe it will be fulfilled; then all nations will be blessed.*

NB: The preaching of Peter made 5000 converts. (4:4)

Theme to the Jews first then to the gentiles

Chapter 4

Annoyed because of Peter's and John's ***preaching on the resurrection of Jesus and of the dead***, the ***priests, commander of the Temple guard and Sadducees*** arrest them and try them before the Sanhedrin. Asked for his authorized to preach and to heal, peter answers: they are doing that "*by the authority of Jesus, the Messiah and Savior.*" They were ***Forbidden to preach*** by the Sanhedrin, but Peter and John answer that ***they must obey God's commandments to be Jesus' witnesses***. After their release from prison, they join the Christians in a prayer of thanksgiving and all receive again the Holy Spirit.

Why Peter and John were arrested? (chap. 4:1-22)

- ✓ Because they preached faith in resurrection which they opposed
- ✓ They preached in the temple, a domain which was under their authority
- ✓ They preached Jesus who they had condemned
- ✓ These authorities feared that Peter & John might cause riots which may anger the Romans hence they would be in trouble.

What Peter said before the council?

-*you crucified Jesus, rejecting the stone*

-*God raised him up*

-*he is the head of the corner*

-*the cripple is healed in his name*

-*salvation is only found in Jesus only.*

NB: the council **warned** them never to speak in the name of Jesus and then **were released**

Why the council did not punish them?

- ✓ They feared the people who witnessed the miracle
- ✓ It was a clear sign that a miracle happened in the name of Jesus

Themes 1 the church shares in Jesus' suffering

2 God uses the church as an instrument of salvation

NB: when the apostles were released, they reported to their fellow believers. The believers then prayed for **boldness** asking God to:

- take notice of the threat
- to allow them to speak the message with boldness
- to stretch his hand to heal and grant them wonders and miracles through the name of Jesus.

CHAPTER 5: 12-42

The apostles are persecuted

Background information

Meanwhile, the apostles preaching and miracle helped many people to become Christians. **This success stirs up the jealousy of the High priest and the Sadducees** who arrested all the apostles. Why the jealousy?

- Because God was using the apostles through the miracles not through them.
- They feared that apostles will have more followers than them.

Meanwhile, in prison God helps them to escape from prison. The apostles then, are found preaching in the Temple and are brought again before the Sanhedrin who forbids them to preach. But they answer again that they must obey God first. This provokes the anger of the council who wanted to kill them. The advice of an important member of the Sanhedrin, **Gamaliel**, stopped them from being killed. After having been beaten, the apostles were released.

NB: Chapter five inaugurates how the apostles were persecuted. In general the persecution were in three ways:

- They were arrested and put them into public jail.
- They were restricted from preaching in the name of Jesus.
- They were threatened that they will be killed.

Miracles and wonders (vv 12- 16)

The results of miracles and wonders done by apostles were that:

- ✓ more and more people were added to the group
- ✓ sick people placed on beds and mats were carried out into the streets so that Peter's shadow might fall on them as he is passing.
- ✓ crowds of people came in from the town around Jerusalem bringing with them those who were ill

Theme 1. Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation
2 .the importance of prayer in the church.

NB: The results of miracle and wonders brought **jealous** from the Sanhedrin. This made them to be arrested.

The arrest of the apostles (vv 17-42)

The Apostles were put in prison but that night **an angel came** and

-opened the prison gate and released the apostles

-and told them to go and stand in the temple and tell the people about the new life.

NB: when they were brought back from the temple. **The apostles were accused of two things:**

- ✓ Disobedience to the council's order -not to speak in Jesus name.
- ✓ wanting to make the council responsible for Jesus' death

The apostles defended themselves by saying *they obey God not men, You killed Jesus but God raised him up and made him leader, we and the Holy Spirit witness to this.* The council was about to kill them but **Gamaliel stopped them by telling them that:**

- They had to learn from the past,
- Two of the fellow Jews, Theudas and Judas had followers

-but their death ended their groups.

-Therefore, if what the believers are doing is coming from God any hindrances will be useless.

The council took the **advice**, instead of being killed the **apostles were:**

-whipped

-and were told never to speak in the name of Jesus, and

-were set free.

Factors that contributed towards Gamaliel's influential status in the council

- He was a teacher of the Law.
- He was a Pharisee.
- He was highly respected by the people
- Was a member of the council.

Theme 1 the church shares in the suffering of Jesus

2 the power of the Holy Spirit is irresistible

CHAPTERS 6-7

The daily distribution of money and food to the poor is the occasion of jealousies and quarrels among the Christians. Overworked, the apostles ask the Christians to choose seven men to help them.

The seven helpers (Deacons) (6:1-7).

Situations that led to the choice of the seven helper/ the seven helpers were chosen as a solution to:

- The quarrel between the Greek speaking Jews and the native Jews.
- Complaint that Greek speaking widows were neglected in the distribution of funds.

Reasons why the seven helpers were chosen

- To handle finances'
- To distribute finances

Pete's speech before the choice of the 7 helpers

-it is not good for us to neglect the preaching of God's word in order to handle finances.

-so then, brothers and sisters choose seven men among you who have Holy Spirit and wisdom.

-and we will put them in charge of this matter

-we ourselves then, will give our full time to prayer and the work of preaching

Qualities (criteria) required for one to be chosen as a deacon / the chosen seven had to have

- *One who is full of Holy Spirit*
- *One full of wisdom.*
- *One known with full of faith*

The apostles prayed and laid hands on them

These are the seven helpers:

Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicolaus

The result of their choice was that:

1. The word continued to spread.
2. The number of disciples in Jerusalem grew larger.
3. Great number of priests accepted the faith.

Theme: 1 prayer is important in the life of the church

2 the Holy Spirit guides the church

The arrest and death of Stephen (6:8-15)

Stephen one of the helpers, starts preaching and debating successfully with Jews who bring him before the council and accuse him of speaking against God, Moses, the Law and the Temple. The charges against the

Jews were: *God's truth is not only for Jews but for everyone; it is not necessary to worship God in the Temple anymore; the Jews have always persecuted the prophets, as they now persecute Jesus.*

Stephen was accused of two things:

- ✓ Speaking against the Law of Moses
- ✓ Speaking against the Temple
- ✓ Speaking that Jesus would tear down the temple
- ✓ and change all the Jewish custom which have come down to them through Moses.

Stephen in his defense accused the Jews that they are like their ancestors who killed the prophets and now they have killed Jesus.

Stephen said:

- God was pleased with Abraham even when he was not circumcised*
- Joseph and Moses were righteous in foreign land where there was no temple*
- God cared for his people even outside the Holy Land*
- therefore, circumcision and staying in the Holy land is not essential*
- Israel has resisted the Spirit of God*
- this resistance has continued in the murdering of prophets and finally in the murder of Jesus.*

Unable to answer Stephen, his enemies especially the **Judaizers⁹⁴**(or the circumcision party) become very angry to the speech of Stephen. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently toward heaven and saw **the glory of God**, and **Jesus standing at the right hand of God**. "Look!" he said. "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" But they covered their ears, shouting out with a loud voice, and rushed at him with one intent .The council dragged him out of the city and stone him to death outside the city. They continued to stone Stephen while he prayed, "**Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!**" Then he fell to his knees and cried out with a loud voice, "**Lord, do not hold this sin against them!**" When he had said this, he died. **Saul** witnessed the death of Stephen.

Themes 1 the church shares in the suffering of Jesus.

2 the power of the Holy Spirit is irresistible.

CHAPTER 8 **THE CHURCH SPREADS OUTSIDE JERUSALEM**

Background information of chapter 8

The immediate result of Stephen death is a *persecution of the Christians* by the Jews. This caused their *dispersion* which was providential since it helped the spreading of the faith in Samaria and even farther north. Thus **Philip**, one of the seven helpers, preached **in Samaria** where he baptized a magician called Simon. This Simon, however, misunderstood the nature of the apostles, ministry and was severely rebuked by Peter.

THE PERSECUTION DONE BY SAUL

Saul started to persecute the church. How?

- (a) He dragged the believers from house to house and threw in jail
- (b) He got a letter of permission from the priest to arrest believers

Gospel in Samaria (8: 4 -25)

Believers were scattered. Philip went to Samaria where he **preached** and did **miracles⁹⁵**. Many people became believers including a magician, Simon who was named "the Great Power".

How Philip brought salvation to Samaria/effects of Philip's visit to Samaria.

- ✓ Preached the good news
- ✓ He cast out evil spirits
- ✓ He healed the lame and the paralyzed

⁹⁴ This group believed that the gentiles were unclean and could not join the church unless they became Jews by following the Law on food, the Sabbath, Circumcision and other Jewish purification.

⁹⁵ People were exorcised, the lame were healed

- ✓ Baptized those who believed
- ✓ People were filled with joy in that city.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that many people in Samaria have believed, they sent Peter and John to give the people the Holy Spirit through laying on of hands. The Magician, Simon wanted to buy the gift of giving the Holy Spirit to people from **Peter and John** but was rebuked by **Peter who said:**

*-you and your money go to hell for thinking you can buy God's gift
 -you have no share in the work because your heart is not right in God's sight
 -Repent and pray for forgiveness of your sins.
 -for I see that you are full of bitter envy and are a prisoner of sin.*

- Themes**
1. Jesus uses the church as an instrument of salvation
 - 2 .Jesus works through the power of the Holy Spirit
 3. The power of the Holy Spirit irresistible.

Phillip and the Ethiopian official (8: 26-40)

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a desert road.) So he got up and went. There he met The official who was the Eunuch, in charge of the Queen of Ethiopia. He had come to Jerusalem to worship, and was returning home, sitting in his chariot, he was reading from the book of Isaiah⁹⁶. Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” Was baptized by Philip. After that, the Holy Spirit took Philip to Azotus who then went to Caesarea and there preached the good news.

- Themes**
- 1 to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles (the church mission is universal)
 2. The Holy Spirit guides the church i.e. an angel told Philip to take the road to Gaza
 - 3 Jesus uses the **church**⁹⁷ as an instrument of salvation. I.e. *people were exorcised by Philip, many lame people were healed, Philip preached Jesus as the savior.*

CHAPTER 9

Background information of chapter 9

One of the greatest persecutors of the Christians was a Pharisees named **Saul**. One day, on his way to arrest Christians in Damascus, he is converted by Jesus himself. Immediately he begins preaching about Jesus, the Messiah and Saviour. Threatened to be killed by the Damascus' Jews, Paul escapes and goes down to Jerusalem where Barnabas introduced him to the Christians community.

Meanwhile, Peter travels in Judea and Samaria healing the sick and preaching. He even raised from the dead a Christian woman called Tabitha.

The conversion of Saul (vv1-9)

Who was Saul?

Saul was born to Jewish parents in a thoroughly observant home in Tarsus (now in Turkey), Saul was originally named for the ancient Hebrew king Saul. On the eighth day he was circumcised, as stipulated by the Jewish Law; indeed, in all respects he was reared in accordance with the Pharisaic interpretation of the Law. His teacher was Gamaliel. As a young Jew of the Diaspora (the dispersion of Jews into the Greco-Roman world), Saul took as his everyday name the Greek name 'Paulus' (Paul), a name with a sound similar to that of his Hebrew birth name, Saul. In this passage:

⁹⁶ Isaiah 53: 7b-9

⁹⁷ This is the community of believers in Jesus.

- ✓ He persecuted the believers **HOW?**
 - He kept up his violent threat of murder against the followers of the Lord.
 - He went to the high priest and asked for letters of introduction to the synagogues in Damascus so that he could arrest believers who are there.
 - He also aimed at bringing all the followers of the Lord to Jerusalem for trial
- ✓ He wanted to arrest believers in Damascus
- ✓ Jesus appeared to him in a vision near Damascus: the men who travelled with Paul only **heard the voice but could not see who was speaking** to Paul
- ✓ Was blind for 3 days in the house of Judas, and was praying and ate or drink nothing in these days. Meanwhile, the Lord's Spirit led Ananias to go to Judas house
- ✓ Paul met Ananias who:
 - Placed his hands on him
 - He baptized him

What did Ananias say to Saul?

-*Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me-Jesus himself who appeared to you on the Lord as you were coming here.*

-*He sent me to so that you might see again and filled with the Holy Spirit.*

Themes 1 .the church shares in the suffering of Jesus

- 2 .Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation
3. God saves mankind through Jesus
4. Prayer is vital in the life of the church

Saul preaches in Damascus (vv 20 – 25)

Now after some days had passed, the Jews plotted together to kill him, but Saul learned of their plot against him. They were also watching the city gates day and night so that they could kill him. **But his disciples took him at night and let him down through an opening in the wall by lowering him in a basket.**

Theme: the church shares in the suffering of the Jesus.

When he arrived in Jerusalem, he attempted to associate with the disciples, and they were all afraid of him, because they did not believe that he was a disciple. But **Barnabas** took Saul, brought him to the apostles, and related to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. He was speaking and debating with the Greek-speaking Jews, but they were trying to kill him. When the believers found out about this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus. There he stayed for eleven years until Barnabas needed his assistance in Antioch.

Peter In Lydda (9: 32 – 35)

Aeneas

- ✓ Was paralyzed for 8 years
- ✓ Was healed by peter. **HOW?** Peter told the man that Jesus Christ would make him well. Then he told him to get up
- ✓ People believed in Jesus

Peter in Joppa (vv 36-43)

Tabitha (GK. Dorcas =dear)

- ✓ Was charitable woman.
- ✓ After her death the believers sent for who was in Ldda
- ✓ Peter raised her from death. **HOW?**
 - He knelt down
 - He prayed

- He told the body of Tabitha to get up.
- She got up and opened her eyes

In Joppa Peter stayed for many days in the house of Simon the tanner.

Theme: Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation

: The importance of prayer in the life of the church.

CHAPTER 10

Background information of chapter 10

At Caesarea, under the guidance of God, Peter baptized a Roman officer named Cornelius after experiencing a **vision**. **God explains to Peter that circumcision and the dietary and purity laws of the OT are not necessary any more for salvation**. God wants the salutations of all people from all nations. The only thing He asks is belief in Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the Savior, and repentance of sins. And before Cornelius` baptism, the Holy Spirit comes down on him and on his companions – all Gentiles – in a Second Pentecost, called the Pentecost of the Gentiles.

Peter and Cornelius (vv 1-8)

Cornelius⁹⁸: Evidence to show that Cornelius was a God fearer

- a. Worshiped God together with his family
- b. Was helping Jewish poor people (he was a charitable woman).
- c. Was constantly praying to God
- d. Was a religious man

One day at 3 o'clock Cornelius saw the vision. The Angel in a vision told him that;

- a. *God is pleased with his prayers and good works and he is ready to answer him*
- b. *He should send 3 servants to Joppa in a house of Simon to meet Peter.*

Theme: the authors' sympathy for the Romans

The vision of peter at Joppa (vv 9 – 16)

The vision

- ✓ As Peter was waiting for the food he became hungry and had a vision
- ✓ He saw the heaven opened
- ✓ He saw a sheet being lowered from heaven. In it were all kinds of animals
- ✓ He was told to kill and eat them
- ✓ Peter answered that he has never eaten anything ritually unclean
- ✓ He was told not to consider anything unclean since God declared them clean
- ✓ This occurred 3 times
- ✓ Then the sheet was taken to heaven.

What lessons can be drawn from the vision?

- No separation is needed between Jews and Gentiles
- Contact with Gentiles does not make a Jew unclean
- Gentiles are clean
- No food is unclean

Theme: The Holy Spirit guides the church

The visit of Cornelius servants to Peter (vv 17-34)

The angel told Peter to go with men who were sent by Cornelius

Themes 1 the Holy Spirit guides the church

2 the authors' sympathy for the Romans

Peters' speech at Cornelius house (vv 34-48)

⁹⁸ He lived in Caesarea

Was a captain of the Roman (Italian Regiment)

- ✓ God treats everyone on the same basis
- ✓ Jesus had Holy Spirit and power from God
- ✓ Jesus healed those who had devils
- ✓ But Jesus was nailed and after 3 days God raised him from death
- ✓ Witnesses ate with him after resurrection
- ✓ Jesus is the judge
- ✓ Everyone who believes is forgiven.

As Peter was speaking:

- *the Holy Spirit came on them and*
- *they spoke in tongues,*
- *then, they were all baptized.*

The circumcised believers who accompanied Peter were surprised that *even the gentiles could speak in tongues.*

Themes: 1 God saves mankind through Jesus

- 2 Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation
- 3 to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles (the church's mission is universal).

CHAPTER 11

Back in Jerusalem, Peter is accused of having eaten with Gentiles and of having baptized them without obliging them to be circumcised first. He justifies his action by telling the Jerusalem Christians that it was God himself who had told him to do so. Because of the persecution in Jerusalem, The church grows elsewhere, especially in *Antioch of Syria*. **Barnabas** is sent there and he encourages the Gentiles to be baptized. He also fetches **Saul**, who was staying in Tarsus and convinces him to come and preach in Antioch. After about one year, **Barnabas and Saul** are sent to Jerusalem to bring money to their Christians Brothers there. Why? Because of the prediction of the severe famine that **Agabus** the prophet predicted.

Peter is criticized in Jerusalem (by circumcised party) (vv 1-18)

Peter was accused of being *a guest at houses of uncircumcised* people even *eating with them*. Peter defended himself by narrating the vision at Joppa. Then all the accusers *stopped their criticism* and said, “**God has given the gentiles the opportunity to repent and live”**

The church at Antioch (vv 19-30)

At *Antioch*⁹⁹ for the first time, *believers were called Christians*. The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch when they heard that there were a lot of believers there.

a. Barnabas (11:24)

- ✓ good man
- ✓ full of the Holy Spirit
- ✓ had faith
- ✓ the church sent him from Jerusalem to Antioch
- ✓ he went to Tarsus and brought Paul to Antioch

Why Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul?

- Because he saw that the work in Antioch was too much for one person.
- He was guided by the Holy Spirit.

Barnabas and Paul stayed in Antioch for one year.

The effect of their work in these two years was that:

⁹⁹ *Antioch* was a city in Syria (not Antioch in Pisidia). This was probably the third largest city in the Greco-Roman world (Alexandria in Egypt was the second largest, and Rome the largest) and was the seat of government in Syria. Five miles away was a major temple to Artemis, Apollo, and Astarte, major pagan deities.

- ✓ Many people turned to the Lord
- ✓ And they were baptized.

b. Agabus (one of the prophets)

- ✓ a prophet
- ✓ Predicted the coming of severe famine throughout the earth.¹⁰⁰

The prediction made the disciples to help one another so they sent Saul and Barnabas to collect relief among believers which was given to the church in Judea.

- Themes:**
1. the Holy Spirit guides the Church
 2. Jesus uses the Church as instrument of salvation
 3. To the Jews first and then to the Gentiles

CHAPTER 12

Background information of chapter 12

About that time, **Herod (Agrippa I)**¹⁰¹ of Judea started persecuting the Christians. James, the leader of the Jerusalem Christian community, was killed, and Peter was arrested. God again delivered Peter from prison. Peter bid farewell to the Christians and left Jerusalem. Herod died some time later.

More persecution vv 1-5

King Herod Agrippa 1 started a serious persecution.

What led Herod to arrest Peter?

- He had James the brother of John killed¹⁰².
- when he saw that this has pleased the Jews
- he went on to arrest Peter.

Peter was thrown into prison and was guided by four groups of soldiers each. Herod was planning to try Peter in public after Passover. Meanwhile the church **was praying** for him. However, Peter was rescued from prison by the angel of the Lord.

Peter is released from prison vv 6-19

- ✓ In prison he was guided by two guards
- ✓ The Angel appeared to him and woke him up and chains fell off Peters' hands
- ✓ Peter put on his cloth, sandals and belt
- ✓ He followed the Angel out of the prison
- ✓ Peter thought he was seeing a vision
- ✓ The Angel left him in a street
- ✓ Peter knocked on the door of Mary(mother of John Mark)
- ✓ **Rhoda the servant** girl answered the knock-*this time the believers were praying for him.*
- ✓ At first, the believers thought that Rhoda is mad and that what was knocking on the door was the angel of Peter.

What happened when the cell was found empty?

- there was confusion among the guards

¹⁰⁰ This famine came during the reign of **Emperor Claudius**-A.D. 45-48.

¹⁰¹ Herod Agrippa I (10? BC-AD 44), last king of Judea (AD 41-44). A grandson of Herod the Great, Herod Agrippa spent his youth at the court of the Roman emperor Tiberius, where he was appointed companion to the emperor's grandson, Gaius Caesar (later Emperor Caligula). When Caligula acceded to the throne in AD 37, he made Agrippa tetrarch (ruler) of Batanea and Trachonitis, territories east of the Sea of Galilee, in what is now southern Syria. Herod Agrippa is mentioned in the New Testament as a persecutor of the Christians. According to Acts 12, he ordered the death of St. James the Great and the imprisonment of St. Peter. In the spring of 44 was host at a spectacular series of games at Caesarea to honor Claudius. There he died., Because his son was only 17 years old, Judaea once more returned to provincial status.

¹⁰² This event took place in **A.D. 42 or 43.**

- they asked what happened to Peter
- Herod gave orders to search for him
- He ordered the guards to be questioned
- Herod ordered the guards to be put to death.

Themes 1. The church shares in the suffering of Jesus

2. Prayer is vital in the life of the church
3. The power of the Holy Spirit is irresistible

Death of Herod Agrippa I vv 20 – 25

What event led to his death?

- ✓ Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon
- ✓ Blastus¹⁰³ was asked to help them
- ✓ The people asked peace because Herods' country supplied food in their country
- ✓ Herod in his royal robes made a speech
- ✓ Gods Angel struck him down because he did not give honor to God (Because he wanted people to recognize him as a god)
- ✓ He was eaten by worms and died.¹⁰⁴

Theme: The power of the Holy Spirit is irresistible

CHAPTER 13 THE CHURCH TO THE GENTILES: PAUL'S THREE JOURNEYS TO THE GENTILES

The first missionary journey (vv 1-52)

Background information of chapter 13

In Antioch¹⁰⁵ there were some prophets and teachers such as: **Barnabas, Simon (called Black), Lucius (from Cyprus), Manen (brought up by Herod), Saul.**

In this Church, the Holy Spirit chose **Barnabas** and **Saul** (Paul) to go and preach salvation to all, especially to the Gentiles. So both started on their **1st Journey**. In **Cyprus**, they met a magician, named **Bar-Jesus**, who tried, unsuccessfully, to prevent the pro consul to be baptized. From Cyprus, Paul and his companions sailed to Asia Minor. In **Antioch of Pisidia**, he preached at length. At first, many Jews were friendly but

¹⁰³ This person was *the one in charge of the bed-chamber, the chamberlain* of the king Herod Agrippa I. (a chamberlain was an official who manages the household of a monarch or member of the nobility)

This individual was not just a domestic servant or butler, but a highly respected person who had considerable responsibility for the king's living quarters and personal affairs. The English word "chamberlain" corresponds very closely to this meaning but is not in common use today.

¹⁰⁴ *He was eaten by worms and died.* Josephus, *Ant.* 19.8.2 (19.343-352), states that Herod Agrippa I died at Caesarea in A.D. 44. The account by Josephus, while not identical to Luke's account, is similar in many respects: On the second day of a festival, Herod Agrippa appeared in the theater with a robe made of silver. When it sparkled in the sun, the people cried out flatteries and declared him to be a god. The king, carried away by the flattery, saw an owl (an omen of death) sitting on a nearby rope, and immediately was struck with severe stomach pains. He was carried off to his house and died five days later. The two accounts can be reconciled without difficulty, since while Luke states that Herod was immediately struck down by an angel, his death could have come several days later. The mention of *worms* with death adds a humiliating note to the scene. The formerly powerful ruler had been thoroughly reduced to nothing (cf. *Jdt* 16:17; *2 Macc* 9:9)

¹⁰⁵ Antioch (Turkey), city in southern Turkey, capital of Hatay Province, on the Orontes River, near the Mediterranean Sea.

soon they became jealousy of the many conversions among the Gentiles. They started to persecute Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their district.

The choice of Barnabas and Saul vv 1-3

The Holy Spirit chose Barnabas and Saul for the mission. This time, these two were serving the Lord and fasting.

The church responded to the word of the Holy Spirit by

- a. *Fasting*
- c. *Placing hands on Barnabas and Saul*
- b. *Praying*
- d. *sending the two*

Themes: 1 the Holy Spirit guides the church

2 prayers is vital in the life of the church

1. At **Paphos** in Cyprus Island, **they** met a magician *Bar Jesus* (a Jew) in Greek *Elymas*. This magician was a friend to Sergius Paulus who was the governor of the Island. . The magician tried to turn away the governor of Cyprus “**Sergius Paulus**” from receiving the gospel

A. Sergius Paulus

- ✓ Governor of Cyprus
- ✓ An intelligent man
- ✓ He called Saul (Paul) and Barnabas to hear the Gospel
- ✓ Was turned away by a magician from faith
- ✓ He became a believer after Paul cursed the magician to be blind for a day.

B. Reaction of Paul to what the magician did

- ✓ *You are a son of the devil*
- ✓ *you are an enemy of everything that is good*
- ✓ *you are full of all kinds of evil tricks*
- ✓ *you try to turn the Lord's truth into lies*
- ✓ *You will be blind and you will not see the light of the day for time.*

Themes: 1. the power of the Holy Spirit is irresistible
 2. Jesus works through the power of the Holy Spirit
 3. God saves mankind through Jesus.

2. In Antioch in Pisidia vv 13-52

The 3 (**Paul, Barnabas** and **John Mark**) left Paphos and reached **Perga**¹⁰⁶ in Pamphylia where *John Mark left them*.

Why John Mark left Paul and Barnabas at Perga?

1. He did not want to travel into the dangerous interior of Asia Minor
2. He saw that Paul was becoming more important than his cousin Barnabas.
3. He might not have realized how much missionary work was going to be directed to the gentiles.
So Paul and Barnabas continued up to **Antioch** in Pisidia.

Incidents at Antioch in Pisidia

On Sabbath they read the book of Law. After it they commented after being asked if they had any message of encouragement. They said:

- *Israelites ancestors were chosen by God*
- *They were brought out of Egypt by God*
- *They were given land of Canaan*
- *Were given judges and kings*
- *Were given Jesus as a savior*
- *Jesus was not recognized by elders hence he was killed on the cross*

¹⁰⁶ The capital of Pamphylia. A difficult mountain route into Phrygia began at Perga,

- *But Jesus rose from the dead after 3 days and appeared to others people*
- *Through Jesus sins are forgiven*
- *Take care then, so that what the prophets said many not happen to you.*

Reaction of the people

- a. They were invited for the next Sabbath
- b. Many Jews, gentiles who had been converted to Judaism followed them.

Next Sabbath things were bad. How? Vv44-52

- ✓ Jews became jealous.
- ✓ They disputed what Paul said.
- ✓ They insulted him.

Reaction of Paul and Barnabas to the insult

- ✓ The gospel came first to you.
- ✓ But you rejected together with eternal life.
- ✓ But God says we are a light of the gentiles so that all the world be saved.

What was the reaction of the following groups to what Paul and Barnabas said?

- a) **Gentiles**
 - they were glad
 - they praised the Lord
- b) **Jews**
 - they stirred up leading men and women of high class who worshipped God
 - they started a persecution against Paul and Barnabas.

NB: the apostles shook off the dust from their feet and went to **Iconium**.

Themes: 1 the church shares in the suffering if Jesus.

2 the author sympathy for the Romans.

CHAPTER 14

Background information of chapter 14

The same thing happened at **Iconium** where the Jews stirred up the Gentiles against Paul. Both, Jews and Gentiles, tried to stone Paul and Barnabas. At Lystra, after having cured a crippled, Paul and Barnabas were taken for pagan gods. The Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who had tried to kill Paul, reached in Lystra and stoned Paul. Fortunately he did not die.

3. In Iconium (vv1-7)

Here, apostles stayed for a long time speaking boldly about Jesus and they proved his grace by performing many miracles and wonders. However, the people got divided:

- ✓ Some believed and others did not
- ✓ But the Apostles did many miracles. This made unbelieving Jews to ill treat and stone them.

NB: The apostles fled to **Lystra, Derbe** and Lycaonia.

Themes: 1 the church shares in the suffering of Jesus
 2 the power of the Holy Spirit is irresistible
 3 Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation

4. In Lystra vv 8-20

- ✓ In **Lystra** a lame man was healed because he believed in Pauls' preaching, the people said, '**the gods have come down to us!**'

- ✓ People called Paul Hermes¹⁰⁷ and Barnabas Zeus¹⁰⁸ (WHY ?because Paul was the chief speaker)
- ✓ Then bulls and flowers were brought by priest to be offered to them as gods
- ✓ The apostle tore their clothes and rebuked them because the apostles were human beings like them. Paul said:
 - we are just men like you*
 - turn away from your false gods*
 - there is one true creator of all*
 - he allowed you to live in Ignorance but did not stop showing love by giving rain and harvest.*

How was Paul treated in Lystra?

- Paul was stoned by Jews from **Iconium** and Antioch.
- They thought he was dead so they dragged him outside the town. Paul woke up and went to **Derbe**.

Theme: the church shares in the suffering of Jesus
 Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation

5. .in Derbe. Here many people believed

The two apostles then retraced their steps, encouraging and consolidating the Christian committees they had established. They reached Antioch of Syria.

Chapter 15 **Jerusalem council**

Background information of chapter 15

In **Antioch**, a big problem waited Paul. Some Jewish Christian from Jerusalem (Judaizers/circumcision party), had travelled to Antioch and told the people there that, in order to become Christians, they had first to be circumcised.

As *Paul and Barnabas had preached exactly the contrary*, a **lot of confusion and dissension ensured**. The leaders of the Christian Church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas and others to Jerusalem in order to ask the apostles to settle that questions.

Peter agreed with **Paul's** teaching and recalled his own baptism of Cornelius whom he had not obliged to be circumcised. Another apostle, **James**, also agreed with Peter and Paul. This was agreed upon and a Letter was sent to Antioch through Paul and Barnabas. After a while, Paul decided to re-visit the cities

¹⁰⁷ Because Paul was the chief speaker-Hermes, in Greek mythology, Hermes was a messenger of the gods. Hermes was the son of the god Zeus and of Maia, the daughter of the Titan Atlas. As the special servant and courier of Zeus, Hermes had winged sandals and a winged hat and bore a golden Caduceus, or magic wand, entwined with snakes and surmounted by wings. He conducted the souls of the dead to the underworld and was believed to possess magical powers over sleep and dreams. Hermes was also the god of commerce, and the protector of traders and herds. As the deity of athletes, he protected gymnasiums and stadiums and was believed to be responsible for both good luck and wealth. Despite his virtuous characteristics, Hermes was also a dangerous foe, a trickster, and a thief. In one version of a characteristic tale, on the day of his birth he stole the cattle of his brother, the sun god Apollo, obscuring their trail by making the herd walk backward. When confronted by Apollo, Hermes denied the theft. The brothers were finally reconciled when Hermes gave Apollo his newly invented lyre. Hermes was represented in early Greek art as a mature, bearded man; in classical art he became an athletic youth, nude and beardless.

¹⁰⁸ Zeus, in Greek mythology, the god of the sky and ruler of the Olympian gods. Zeus corresponds to the Roman god Jupiter. Zeus was considered, according to Homer, the father of the gods and of mortals. He did not create either gods or mortals; he was their father in the sense of being the protector and ruler both of the Olympian family and of the human race. He was lord of the sky, the rain god, and the cloud gatherer, who wielded the terrible thunderbolt. His breastplate was the aegis, his bird the eagle, his tree the oak.

where he had established a Church during his 1st Journey. This time he went with **Silas**, having quarreled with Barnabas over John Mark.

The Jerusalem council (vv1-21)

The council solved the conflict between those who opted for gentiles to be circumcised before becoming Christians i.e. Judaizers and those who refused i.e. Paul and Barnabas.

Peter's speech at the council

-God chose me to preach to the gentiles.

-God gave the gentiles faith and the Holy Spirit as a sign of approval.

-Gentiles are clean through faith.

-gentiles are saved by the grace not by the Law.

-we must not burden them with our old law which even we Jews find it difficult to follow.

-gentiles are saved by the grace of Jesus not by the Law we Jews are also saved by that grace, not by Law.

James' speech at the meeting

-I concur with Simeon because the scripture supports his views.

-we must not impose our law on the gentiles.

-a letter to be written to the gentiles telling them what was ritually clean or not.

The letter to the gentile believers (vv 22-36)

Content of the letter/conditions for the gentile Christians

- Not to eat food offered to idols.
- Not to eat blood.
- Not to eat strangled animal.
- To abstain from sexual immorality.

Four people were sent to Antioch with the letters: **Paul, Barnabas, Judas (Barsabbas) and Silas**

Reaction of the gentiles to the content of the letter

- They were filled with joy by the message of encouragement.

THEME: The Holy Spirit guides the Church.

THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY OF PAUL (15:36-18:22)

Chapter 16

Paul and Barnabas separate (vv36-41) WHY?

- They differed on whether John Mark should join them or not.

- Paul thought **John Mark** could not be the right person because he left them during the first journey; hence, Paul chose **Silas** and went to Syria and Cilicia. Barnabas took John Mark and went to Cyprus.

On his 2nd journey Paul went by land and started with *Derbe*,¹⁰⁹ the last city visited during 1st journey. In this journey Paul, started with Silas and then later, with Timothy. At *Lystra*, he found **Timothy** who became his companion. At *Troas*, Paul was joined by Luke , then he crossed to Macedonia, in Europe. At **Philip**,

¹⁰⁹ *Derbe* was a city in Lycaonia about 35 miles (60 km) southeast of Lystra. It was about 90 mi (145 km) from Tarsus

Paul's cure of a slave girl whose spirit of **divination**¹¹⁰ enabled her masters to enrich themselves, started a persecution against himself and his companions. They were beaten and put in prison but, like Peter twice before. Paul was delivered with God's help. Paul refused to leave the prison before the magistrates had come to apologies from having beaten and imprisoned Roman Citizens – Paul and Silas – without a proper trial

1. in Lystra: There Paul found a man named **Timothy**

- he was a Christian and many people spoke well of.
- his mother was a Jew (and a Christian) and his father was a Greek.(he was a half Jew, and hence, not circumcised)
- was circumcised by Paul.
- he accompanied Paul and Silas.

NB: Paul circumcised Timothy in order to associate with Jews who could not allow uncircumcised people.

2. in Troas¹¹¹ (16:6-10)

Paul and Timothy passed through the Province of Phrygia and Galatia without preaching in these places because *the Holy Spirit did not allow them to do so*. They also reached the border of Mysia and tried to go province of Bithynia but the Holy Spirit did not allow them to preach there. They spent a night in Troas in Asia where Paul saw a vision of a Macedonian begging him to preach there.

THEME

- a) The Holy spirit guides the church
- b) To the Jews first, then, to the gentiles.

3. In Philip (vv11-15)

A) Conversion of Lydia

From Troas, Paul went to Philip in Macedonia. On the Sabbath, they went where the Jews gathered there. Lydia worshipped God and her profession was dealing with purple cloth. After Paul had preached there, Lydia called him to her house where she lived. Later she insisted that she wanted to accompany Paul.

Theme: Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation.

B) Paul and Silas are thrown into prison (16: 16-24)

When Paul and Silas were in Phillip, they met a servant woman who had an evil spirit that enabled her predict the future. She earned a lot of money for her owners by telling fortunes.

She followed Paul while shouting that these men were the servants of **most high God**, and that these men announce the good news for people to be saved. Paul became upset that she turned around and removed (cast out) the evil spirit from her.

¹¹⁰The practice of determining the hidden significance or cause of events, sometimes foretelling the future, by various natural, psychological, and other techniques. Found in all civilizations, both ancient and modern, it is encountered most frequently in contemporary mass society in the form of horoscopes, astrology, crystal gazing, tarot cards, and the Ouija board. Or this is the prediction of future events through the use of disproportionate means: means not instituted by God. Divination falls into different categories: dream –omens, geomancy, Necromancy, **pythonism** (here the devil reveals the future through living persons who are possessed. C.F Acts 16:16-17).

¹¹¹ *Troas* was a port city (and surrounding region) on the northwest coast of Asia Minor, near ancient Troy

How the owners reacted to what Paul did to the girl?

- They seized Paul and Silas
- They were dragged to the authorities in the public square.

Why the owners of the girl react?

- Because they saw that the chance of making money has gone

Accusations made against Paul and Silas before the Roman authorities.

-causing trouble in the city

-teaching customs that were against the Law

How did Paul and Silas suffer before being thrown into jail

-their clothes were torn off

- were severe beaten.

-They were whipped.

NB: in prison, their feet were fastened between heavy blocks of wood.

THEME :1)The church shares in Jesus' suffering

2) God saves mankind through Jesus-the *girl was exorcised.*

Paul and Silas in prison: Things that happened that led to their release VV25-34)

- The two were praying and singing.
- an earth quake arose that made the foundation of the prison shake.
- the chains were unfastened from all prisoners.
- the doors were opened.

How the jailer reacted when he saw what happened?

- He woke up
- He thought that the prisoners had escaped
- He pulled out his sword and was about to kill himself.

NB; Paul in loud voice told the jailer not to harm himself because all the prisoner were there.

What happened after the incident?

- He called for light.
- He rushed in and fell trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas.
- He led them out and asked what he could do to be saved.
- Paul told him to believe in the Lord Jesus together with his family.
- Paul preached the word of the Lord to him and to all others in the house.
- At that very hour of the night, the jailer took them and washed their wounds.
- The jailer and his family were baptized.
- The jailer took the two apostles to his house and gave them food to eat.
- He and his family were filled with joy because they believed in God.

NB: The main reason why the Roman official apologized to Paul and Silas was that they realized that they were Roman Citizens therefore, they were not supposed to receive that punishment. They received non-Roman punishment.

THEME: 1). prayer is vital for the church.

2) .The power of the Holy Spirit is irresistible.

3) .Jesus works through the Holy Spirit

4) God saves mankind through Jesus-*the jailer and his family were baptized.*

NB: After their release, they went to **Lydia's** house.

Who was Lydia?

- was a dealer in purple cloth.
- worshipped God.
- baptized together with her household.
- the apostles stayed at her house before and after imprisonment.

THEME: God uses the church as instrument of salvation.

Chapter 17

Background information of chapter 17

In Thessalonica, Paul's preaching and the conversion of many Gentiles, caused the jealousy of the Jews. They incited the rabble (or corner boys) to start a riot against Paul. Paul had to flee. They even pursued him to **Berea** from where Paul left for **Athens**. In Athens, Paul's meeting with Philosopher was not very successful. They accepted readily enough his teaching on God the creator, but they could not accept his teaching on the resurrection of the dead and of Jesus.

4. in Thessalonica (17:1-9)

In a synagogue the two:

- Held discussions with the people.
- Quoted and explained scriptures.
- Proved that Jesus was the Messiah, prefigured in the OT.

NB: many people were convinced and some leading women and a large group of Greeks became believers.

THEME: Salvation first to the Jews, then to the gentiles.¹¹²

Reaction of the Jews to the success of Paul

- Became jealous.
- Gathered worthless loafers from the streets and formed a mob and set the whole city in an uproar.
- They attacked the home of Jason before the city authorities in attempt to find Paul and Silas.

Jason and other believers were accused of:

- Causing trouble
- Keeping Paul and Silas in Jason's house
- Breaking the law of the Emperor.
- Claiming that there is another king called Jesus.

The authority made Jason and others to pay the required amount of money to be released.

NB: at night the two apostles went to *Berea*

THEME: a) the church shares in the suffering of Jesus.

¹¹² Just because the two entered the synagogue

5. In Berea (17: 10-15)

Here, they (Paul, Silas, Timothy) went to a synagogue where people proved to be open and studious to the word. HOW?

- they listened to Paul with great eagerness.
- everyday they studied scriptures to compare with what Paul preached.
- many believed.
- many Greek women and men believed.

THEME: Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation

Problem they faced there

Thessalonian Jews came and stirred a mob against Paul. This made believers to send Paul to Coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed for a while before they were called to by Paul in *Athens*.

6. In Athens (17:16-34)-here the inhabitants were idol worshippers.

Reaction of Paul to what he saw

- held discussions in the synagogue with those who worshipped God.
- preached in public square about Jesus and resurrection to those whose who pass by.

Reaction of the audience

- Epicurean**¹¹³ and **stoic**¹¹⁴ teachers debated with him.
- some asked, '*what is this ignorant show off trying to say?*'
- others answered, '*he seems to be talking about foreign gods*'
- they brought Paul before **the council**, called the **Areopagus**.¹¹⁵

Why before the council?

- wanted to know Paul's new teaching on resurrection.
- wanted to know the meaning of what Paul preached, since, it was strange to them.

Speech of Paul to the gentiles in Athens

- you are very religious.
- God is creator and does not live in temples.
- He is in control and we are His children.
- the time of ignorance is now over.
- God raised Jesus from death.*
- He is a judge of us all.

Reaction of the council upon hearing the point of resurrection

- some made fun of him i.e. we will hear you again about this.

¹¹³ **Epicureans** were the follower of a philosopher named Epicurus. Epicurus was a practical philosopher, meaning that the thought of a person should have effect upon the life of a person. Hence; the chief aim of human life is pleasure which comes through drinking, eating and merrying. Epicurus taught people that they should not fear God since god does not control human affairs. God is like a spectator in a stadium, therefore, whether one suffers or not it does not concern god. Hence, after death nothing comes and our bodies dissolves and become like atoms. In summary human destiny lies in our hands, therefore, there is no god, no afterlife. Man is free to do his things.

¹¹⁴ **Stoics** were the followers of stoic. He taught that human life is like a drama. In drama we do have different roles. Therefore, that is important is not that you have taken a bad role or a good role, but we have to live and perform our part well so that we need to enjoy our part'/role.

¹¹⁵ This was a meeting place for the council and had a large space for people

-some believed i.e. Dionysius¹¹⁶ and a woman named Damaris.

THEME: 1). The church shares in the suffering of Jesus.

2) .Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation.

3) Salvation first to the Jews then to the gentiles.

Problems that Paul faced in Athens that made his mission difficult.

- The people were not serious and listened only out of curiosity.
- They were used to worshipping many gods they presumed that Paul talked about two gods when he mentioned Jesus and resurrection.
- Paul's culture was thought to be inferior so his listeners were prejudiced against him.

NB: Paul left Athens and went to *Corinth*.

Chapter 18

Background information of chapter 18

At Corinth, Paul met a Christian couple, **Aquila** and **Priscilla**. This family came from Italy after Emperor Claudius ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. The Corinth Jews rejected Paul's teaching so he addressed himself to the Gentiles. The Jews accused Paul before **Gallio**, the proconsul of **Achaia** who dismissed the case as being of no concern of his. Paul then went back to Antioch. After some time, Paul started on a 3rd journey. At Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla completed the instruction of a man called **Apollo**'s who was then sent to preach at Corinth.

7. In Corinth¹¹⁷ (18:1-23)

-Paul met a Jew **Aquila** with his wife, **Priscilla**

-these two came from Italy due to the decree on Jews by Emperor Claudius¹¹⁸.

-Paul stayed there for almost a year.

How did this family help Paul?

-allowed Paul to stay with them.

-they worked with Paul and earned money through tent making.

Successes in Corinth

- **Aquila and Priscilla** became believers
- **Crispus¹¹⁹** and his family believed.
- **Titius Justus**, a gentile became a believer.
- Many believed and were baptized.

How the people reacted when they heard the message of Paul

- They opposed him.
- They said evil things about him.

¹¹⁶ A member of the council.

¹¹⁷ *Corinth* was the capital city of the senatorial province of Achaia and the seat of the Roman proconsul. It was located 55 miles (88 km) west of Athens. Corinth was a major rival to Athens and was the largest city in Greece at the time

¹¹⁸ Tiberius Claudius Nero Germanicus, known as Claudius, who ruled from a.d. 41-54. The edict expelling the Jews from Rome was issued in a.d. 49

¹¹⁹ He was the leader of the synagogue

How Paul responded to the rejection of people

- He shook dust from his clothes and said *your blood be on your own heads! I am guiltless! From now on I will go to the Gentiles!*"

THEME: 1) God saves mankind through Jesus.

- 2) Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation.

After this Paul went to live in the house of gentile **Titius Justus**, The Lord said to Paul by a vision in the night,

- Do not be afraid
- Keep on speaking
- Do not give up for I am with you
- No one will be able to harm, for many in this city are my people

So he stayed there a **year and six months**, teaching the word of God among them.

Problems Paul faced when Gallio¹²⁰ became governor of Achaia. (18:12-17)

- The Jews seized Paul and took him into court.
- Accused him of persuading people to worship in the way which is against the law.

Reaction of Gallio

- found Paul innocent,¹²¹ Gallio said that if Paul had committed a crime, he would have judged the case but since it was a question of names and words in their Jewish law, he refused to judge the case.
- he drove them out of the court.

Reaction of the Jews to what Gallio did or spoke

- they seized **Sosthens**¹²² and beat him. But Gallio did nothing.

THEME: 1) The church shares in the suffering of Jesus.

- 2) The author's sympathy for the Romans.

Paul, after staying many more days in Corinth, said farewell to the brothers and sailed away to Syria accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because he had made a vow. **When they reached Ephesus, Paul left Priscilla and Aquila behind there**, but he himself went into the synagogue and addressed the Jews. When they asked him to stay longer, he would not consent, ut said farewell to them and added "I will come back to you again if God wills." Then he set sail from Ephesus, and when he arrived at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church at Jerusalem.

The third missionary journey of Paul

¹²⁰ *Gallio* was proconsul of Achaia from A.D. 51-52. This date is one of the firmly established dates in Acts. Lucius Junius Gallio was the son of the rhetorician Seneca and the brother of Seneca the philosopher. The date of Gallio's rule is established from an inscription. Thus the event mentioned here is probably to be dated July-October A.D. 51.

¹²¹ He then handed Paul back to them and said it was an argument about words and names not a matter of some evil crime or wrong.

¹²² The leader of the synagogue

(18:18-24:26)

EPHESUS

A. Apollos in Ephesus and in Corinth (18:24-28) who was Apollos?

-was a Jew, born in Alexandria and an eloquent speaker.

-Had a thorough knowledge of the scriptures.

-His preaching was inadequate because:

-He only knew the baptism of John.

So **Priscilla** and **Aquila** took him home and explained to him more correctly the way of God. **Then he went to Corinth** where he strongly argued with Jews in public debates and defeated the Jews in a debate by proving from the scripture that Jesus is the Messiah. After this Apollos went to Achaia and was of great help and many became believers

THEME: the power of the Holy Spirit is irresistible.

Chapter 19

B. Paul in Ephesus (19:1-10)

(1) Paul met the 12 disciples of John

Here the 12 disciples of John the Baptist who had never heard about the Holy Spirit and they had received the baptism of John (believers) benefitted from Paul's visit. How?

-Paul explained to them the difference between the baptism of John and that of Jesus.

-they were baptized in the name of Jesus.¹²³

-the Holy Spirit came upon them when Paul placed his hand on them.

-they spoke in tongues.

NB: Paul stayed for 3 months in Ephesus where he preached in synagogue he also did many miracles:

- *The aprons and handkerchiefs* were used to cure diseases and cast out evil spirits.

Some Jews began to speak against Paul. So he went to preach in the local school, where he stayed for 2 years.

THEME: God saves mankind through Jesus

(2) The sons of Sceva (19:11-20)

Sceva-was a Jewish priest. His 7 sons tried to drive evil spirit in the name of Jesus which Paul preaches. But the evil spirit would say that *it knew Jesus and Paul but not them*. Then the evil spirit through the possessed man would *attack them, wound them and tore their clothes*.

Reaction of the people about this incident

-were filled with fear.

-gave honour to the name of Jesus.

-many repented.

-many magicians brought their books to be burnt.

(3) Riot in Ephesus (19:21-41)

¹²³ Since they had only received the baptism of John Only.

The town of Ephesus attracted many pilgrims who visited the **shrine¹²⁴** of the goddess **Artemis¹²⁵**. Her worshippers bought the products of the silversmiths. Because of **the way of the Lord-the belief in and practices of Jesus** which Paul's was preaching, the influence of Artemis were decreasing, so a riot arose which was fueled by **Demetrius**. Demetrius and his friends made silver models of the temple of the goddess Artemis, so the preaching of Paul disturbed the business. Demetrius addressed his fellow silversmiths:

Speech of the Demetrius to his silver smiths

- we make a living by selling shrines of Artemis.
- Paul turns our customers away from worshipping Artemis
- our business will get a bad name.
- the temple will lose its value.

Reaction of the mob:

- Became furious,
- they seized two of Paul's companions, **Gaius** and **Aristarchus** to the theatre and
- shouted, 'Great is Artemis of Ephesus.'

Speech of the town clerk to the mob (Alexander)

¹²⁴ at Ephesus, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The great temple was built by Croesus, king of Lydia, in about 550 BC and was rebuilt after being burned by a madman named Herostratus in 356 BC. The Artemesium was famous not only for its great size about 110 by 55, m but also for the magnificent works of art that adorned it. The temple was destroyed by invading Goths in AD 262 and was never rebuilt.

¹²⁵ Artemis, in *Greek mythology*, one of the principal goddesses, counterpart of the Roman goddess **Diana**. She was the daughter of the god Zeus and Leto and the twin sister of the god Apollo. **She** was chief hunter to the gods and goddess of hunting and of wild animals, especially bears. **Artemis** was also the goddess of childbirth, of nature, and of the harvest. As the moon goddess, she was sometimes identified with the goddesses Selene and Hecate. Although traditionally the friend and protector of youth, especially young women, Artemis prevented the Greeks from sailing to Troy during the Trojan War until they sacrificed a maiden to her. According to some accounts, just before the sacrifice, she rescued the victim, Iphigenia. Like Apollo, **Artemis** was armed with a bow and arrows, which she often used to punish mortals who angered her. In other legends, she is praised for giving young women who died in childbirth a swift and painless death.

He defended Paul by saying that Paul was neither sacrilegious nor blaspheming the goddess Artemis he said:

- Ephesus is the keeper of the Temple of Artemis and the sacred stone.*
- The seized men did not rob the temple or say anything bad against Artemis.*
- Use the court if you want to charge them not riotous uproar.*
- all of us can be charged with the offence of rioting.*

THEME: 1) the church shares in the suffering of the Jesus.

2) The sympathy of the author for the Romans.

4. Obstacles which Paul faced in Ephesus (4 marks)

- When he preached to people, they were stubborn and would not believe
- They said evil things about the way of the Lord -Christianity

Chapter 20

From Ephesus after the disturbances has ended, Paul went to **Macedonia, Achaia, Troas and Miletus**, where he encouraged the believers. Paul decided to leave for Jerusalem. On his way back, he stopped at **Miletus** where he called a meeting of the elders of the church of Ephesus. In a long speech, Paul spoke of his ministry and of his previous persecution by the Jews. He exhorted the elders to be dedicated and faithful shepherds of their flocks.

2... Last visit of Paul to Troas (20:7-14)

Here **Eutychus** fell from the upstairs down and died¹²⁶. Paul raised him from death.¹²⁷

THEME: Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation

: Prayer is vital in the life of the church.

3.. Farewell speech of Pau to the elders of Ephesus (vv17-38)

- I preached to the Jews and gentiles.*
- the Holy Spirit warned me about imprisonment and troubles.*
- beware others will come and lead you astray.*
- trust in God and take my good examples of working hard.*

Reaction of the elders.

- they cried, hugged and kissed him.
- they were sad.

4..at Miletus. Here Paul called the elders of Ephesus and bid farewell. He also encouraged them to watch out for wolves who would mislead them. He prayed with them and gave them goodbye and people cried.

Chapter 21

Paul decides to go to Jerusalem (21:vv1-16)

On his way to Jerusalem at **Caesarea**, Paul stayed in the house of Philip (one of the 7 deacons-he had four daughters who helped him proclaim the Good News). While there, a prophet **Agabus** came and took Paul's belt and tied up his own hands and feet and said, '*this is what the Holy Spirit says the owner of this belt will be tied up in this way by the Jews in Jerusalem and they will hand him over to the Gentiles*' Meaning that

¹²⁶ During this time, Paul was having a fellowship meal and was also speaking to the people until night.

¹²⁷ How? 1) Paul threw himself down, 2) hugged him and 3) told the people not to worry for he was alive.

Paul would be tried in Jerusalem and handed over to the gentiles. The other believers begged him not to go to Jerusalem, but Paul refused¹²⁸to remain.

- THEME:**
- 1) the Holy Spirit guides the church
 - 2) Prayer is vital in the life of the church.

(21:17-26)

What the circumcision party said Paul had told the gentiles.

When Paul arrived in Jerusalem he was welcomed warmly and gave a complete report about what happened among the gentiles. But **the circumcision party accused Paul the following:**

- Teaching all the Jews living in gentile countries to abandon the Law of Moses.
- Telling them not to circumcise their children.
- Telling them not to follow the Jewish customs.

Paul meets James in Jerusalem :Advise of James to Paul to the accusations

- Join the four men who had taken a vow.
- Join them in the ceremony of purification.
- Pay for their expenses.
- should also shave his head.

The arrest of Paul in Jerusalem (21: 27-36)

Paul was arrested before his seven days of purification were over.

Three accusations were laid by Jews from Asia against Paul:

- ✓ Teaching everyone against the people of Israel.
- ✓ Teaching against the Law of Moses and the Temple.
- ✓ Defiling the temple by bringing in gentiles.¹²⁹

How the people reacted

- There was confusion, they all ran together
- They dragged Paul
- The mob closed the temple doors.

The mob beat Paul and tried to kill him and uproar arose. The Roman commander had to step in to stop the riot. Paul was taken to the fort (barracks). Paul had to be carried by the soldiers because the mob was screaming kill him.

Chapters 22-23

Speaking in Hebrew – which pleased the people – Paul told them about himself, his original hatred of the Christians, his conversion and his mission to the Gentiles. But the crowd listened to him for sometimes but lost patience and would not listen to him and asked for his death. The tribune, who had ordered Paul to be scourged, changed his mind quickly when he learned that he was a Roman Citizens. In order to know why Paul was accused by the Jews, the Tribunes called a meeting of the Council or Sanhedrin to Judge Paul.

Paul's defense before the Israelites/Jews (21:37-22:29)

- I am a Jew born in Tarsus in Cilicia therefore, a Roman citizen.
- I am a student of Gamaliel.

¹²⁸ Acts 21:13

¹²⁹ This was said because of **Trophimus** from Ephesus, who was with Paul.

-I was converted near Damascus.

-my mission is to preach to the gentiles.

NB: Because he was a Roman by birth, he was not whipped. In barracks he was given a fair treatment because he had not done anything wrong against the Roman law.

Reasons why the council failed to give a fair judgment to Paul?

- Because he said he was a Jew from Tarsus.
- He said he knew the laws and traditions as taught by Gamaliel.

THEME: the church shares in the suffering of Jesus.

: the author's sympathy for the Romans.

Chapter 23

Background information of chapter 23.

Knowing that the Council/Sanhedrin was made up of Pharisees and Sadducees, Paul very cleverly proclaimed himself a Pharisee and a believer in the resurrection of the dead. As the Sadducees deny the resurrection, Paul's statement started a dispute which ended with the Pharisees defending him against the Sadducees. Paul was finally brought safely into the soldier's quarters. But some Jews (about 40) vowed to kill Paul. Their plot was discovered, however, and Paul was sent under guard to **Caesarea** to be judged by the Roman governor, **Felix**.

1st trial

Paul before the Jewish council (22:30-23:11)

The commander took Paul before the council to find out reasons why Paul should be imprisoned. The high priest ordered those who were standing with Paul to strike his mouth when he was defending himself. Paul said:

--I am a Pharisee, son of Pharisee.

-I am tried because of my belief in the resurrection of the dead.

Reaction of the council

-the Pharisees and Sadducees got divided.

-the crowd became divided.

-they argued violently.

-some of the teachers of the law who belonged to the party of the Sadducees stood up and demanded to acquit the case of Paul.

Paul was put in prison. While there the Lord told Paul that:

-do not be afraid

-you have witnessed me in Jerusalem

-and you must do the same in Rome

THEME: the church shares in the suffering of Jesus.

Plot against Paul's life¹³⁰ (23:12-22)

Some 40 Jews decided to fast until they kill Paul. But the plot was discovered by the **son of Paul's sister**.

He went to the fort (camp) and told Paul and the commander, **Claudius Lysias**. He said:

-*the Jewish authorities will ask you to bring back Paul to the council to get further information.*

-*but that will be a pretence.*

-*do not listen to them, 40 Jews will ambush you and kill Paul.*

-*The Jews have taken a vow to fast until Paul is killed.*

Reaction of the commander (Claudius Lysias) to the plot (23:23-30)

-he instructed 2 officers to take 200 soldiers ready to go to Caesarea by 2100hrs and 70 horsemen and 200 spear men and Paul be given a horse to ride.

-he wrote a letter to be given to Governor **Felix**.

Content of the letter

-*the Jews seized this man and were about to kill him.*

-*I rescued him because he was a Roman.*

-*before the council, I learnt that he is innocent.*

-*But the Jews are plotting to kill him.*

THEME: The church shares in the suffering of Jesus.

: The author's sympathy for the Romans.

Chapter 24

Paul is sent to Felix (23:31-24)

Five days later, the high-priest, Ananias, with some elders and their lawyer, **Tertullus**, went to Caesarea to testify against Paul before Governor Felix.

Tertullus accused Paul of

- Being political rebel i.e. he *stirs a riot among the Jews all over the world.*
- *he is the leader of a Nazarene party* (which operates without government approval)
- *He defiled the Temple.*
- *he is a dangerous nuisance*

In his defense, Paul denies these charges and gave the real reason for his trial, viz. his belief in the resurrection of the dead

Paul's defense (vv10-21)

-*my accuser cannot prove where I started the riot.*

-*I am a Jew and believe in God of my ancestors.*

-*I purify myself before going in the temple.*

-*I am accused because I believe in resurrection.*

Reaction of Governor Felix after hearing both sides (vv22)

-he adjourned the case waiting **Lysias¹³¹** to come.

¹³⁰ The Jews became angry when they saw that the case against Paul has failed. So they planned just to kill Paul.

¹³¹ The commander who protected him in Jerusalem from the mob.

-he ordered that Paul be guided but with some freedom. (v23)

Felix knew that Paul was innocent but he did not release Paul because he was afraid of the Jews, therefore he kept Paul in prison for two years hoping to receive a bribe from him. So he was having regular meeting with him.

2d trial

Paul's defense before Felix and Drusilla (24:24 up to chapter-27)

Drusilla was a wife of Governor Felix.

Reasons why Felix was afraid of Paul.

In his defense, Paul talked about:

- goodness,
- self control
- and the judgment day.

NB: Felix reserved his judgment of the case and kept Paul in Prison .The governor Felix was then replaced by **Porcius Festus**.

Chapter 25

3rd trial : Paul appeals to the emperor (25: 1-12)

Paul was again tried before **Festus** who, in order to please the Jews, was about to release Paul to go to Jerusalem. To save his life, Paul appealed to Caesar, to be judged in Rome by the emperor, a request Festus could not refuse. Before sending Paul to Rome, Festus asked **King Herod Agrippa II** to examine the case.

4th trial

Paul before King Agrippa II and Governor Bernice (25: 13 -26:32)

Agrippa¹³² and **Bernice** visited Caesarea to welcome Festus. There Festus explained to the king about Paul. The King and the governor agreed that Paul did nothing wrong. Invited to Speak by Agrippa, Paul again went briefly over his life and re – affirmed his belief that Jesus is the Messiah and that all men, Jews and Gentiles, should repent and believe in Jesus. As Festus before him, Agrippa found Paul innocent

Agrippa commented that:

- Paul had done nothing deserving to death or imprisonment.*
- Paul could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar*

THEME: the church shares in the suffering of Jesus.

: The author's sympathy for the Romans.

Chapter 27 and Chapter 28

With many other prisoners, Paul started his journey to Rome. They went by sea. Caught in a violence storm, the boat was shipwrecked on the Islands of Malta.

Paul sails for Rome (27:1-12)

-On board, Paul was put in the hands of **Julius**.¹³³ **Julius treated Paul well. How?**

- *He allowed Paul to visit his friends as Sidon.*

¹³² Agrippa had knowledge on Jewish customs and would understand Paul's presentation.

¹³³ An officer of the Roman Regiment called 'the emperor Regiment'

- *He stopped the other soldiers from killing all the prisoners at Malta, when there was a shipwreck.*

THEME-The author of Acts shows sympathy to the Romans.

How Paul was beneficial to others on this journey?

- He foretold that the voyage would be dangerous. (27:9-11)
- He encouraged them that none will die.
- He encouraged the others to eat and he even multiplied the bread.¹³⁴

What the angel of the Lord told Paul in a vision?

- Do not be afraid Paul you must stand before the emperor.
- God in his goodness to you has spared the lives of all those who are sailing with you.

On Malta Paul escaped snake – poisoning and healed the father of the governor of the islands. After 3 months, Paul and his companion took another ship to Italy, in Rome. In Rome, Paul was welcomed by the Christians. He called a meeting of the leaders of the Jewish Community and explained why he was a prisoner. As usual, Paul preached first to the Jews but, as many of them rejected his teaching, he told them he would preach to the Gentiles.

Why the people at Malta named Paul a ‘murderer’ then later ‘a god?’

- ✓ It was raining and cold at the island
- ✓ The natives made a fire for Paul and his friends/companions
- ✓ Paul took a bundle of sticks and put it on fire
- ✓ **A snake came and fasted itself on Paul’s hand because of heat**
- ✓ **The natives said Paul was a murderer**
- ✓ He would not live although he survived the storm
- ✓ Paul shook the snake onto fire
- ✓ **They expected to see the hand to swell and Paul falling dead**
- ✓ **When nothing happened they concluded that Paul was a god (28:6)**

At Malta, **Publius**, the chief officer of the Island welcomed the prisoners and they stayed there for **three days**.

(28: 7-10)

Miracles of Paul at Malta

-Paul healed the father of Publius from fever and dysentery.

-Paul healed many sick people.

THEME: 1). Jesus uses the church as instrument of salvation.

2). Prayer is vital for the life of the church.

How were the people at Malta friendly to Paul and his companions?

- ❖ They gave them many gifts.
- ❖ Gave them what they needed on the board.
- ❖ Fire was lit for them.

PAUL IN ROME

Speech of Paul to the elders in Rome (vv16-31)

¹³⁴ There were 276 prisoners.

In Rome Paul was welcomed by believers. Paul addressed the Jews leaders after three days of his arrival:

- though innocent, our leaders in Jerusalem handed me to the Romans.*
- the Romans declared me innocent, but the Jews objected, so I appealed to Caesar.*
- I am chained because of the hope we share as Jews.*

Some Jews believed but others did not.

NB: Paul quoted **Isaiah 6:9-10** to show that the Jews had rejected the good news.

‘Listen continually, but don’t understand!
 Look continually, but don’t perceive!
 Make the hearts of these people calloused;
 make their ears deaf and their eyes blind!
 Otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
 their hearts might understand and they might repent and be healed”.

In Rome, Paul was left to live by himself because he was a Roman citizen.

THEME-The author of Acts shows sympathy to the Romans-*Paul was given some freedom.*

Conclusion of Acts

Acts ended in abruptly. Paul is in Rome and has been waiting for 2 years to be tried before Caesar.¹³⁵ Then, the Book closes. But questions remain: what will happen to Paul? Is he going to be martyred? Or acquitted or released? We do not know.

NEW TOPICS IN THE SYLLABUS

Events in the life of Jesus that were foretold by the Old Testament prophets.

These events show the link between the Old Testament and the New Testament and at the same time, they fulfill the prophecies of the coming of the messiah.

	EVENT FORETOLD	OT	NT
1	Jesus was named Immanuel and was born from a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Mathew 1: 18-25
2	Jesus was born in Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Mathew 2: 1-6
3	Jesus received a special anointing by the Holy Spirit	Isaiah 11: 2-5	Mathew 3:16
4	Jesus was betrayed by a close friend (his own disciple)	Psalms 41: 9	Mk. 14:10
5	Jesus suffered as a sinless servant	Isaiah 53: 1-12	Lk. 23: 13 -29

Other prophecies concerning the messiah which were also fulfilled are as follows:

- Gentiles are blessed through Christ as the offspring of Abraham (***Gen. 22: 18 and Galatians 3:6***)
- Jesus is the high priest after the order of Melchizedek and he interceded for us (***Psalms 110: 4 and Hebrews 5:5***)
- Jesus is the king of kings who rules over all nations and rulers, bringing judgment (Psalms 2: 6-9 and Revelation 19: 11-16).
- He would be the Lamb of God, tortured, crucified and would take the sins of the world upon himself (Isaiah 53 and Luke 24).

Biblical beliefs

There are various beliefs about God among people which come from different sources such as African Tradition Religion (ATR), Christianity and Islam. For example, in ATR, people see God as having a 'big eye' meaning that God sees everywhere. In Christianity, God is taken as the father who cannot die (God is immortal) and in Islam God is one, the creator and sustainer of the universe.

A) **BIBLICAL BELIEFS ABOUT GOD**

- **God is Spirit** (John 4: 24)

The spirit is a divine person and fully God. The Spirit was sent by the father to the disciples on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit leads Christians to all the truth. The Holy Spirit teaches Christianity the right conducts of a Christian (Eph.5:7-14). The spirit of God gives Christians power to continue with the work that God began in Jesus. The Holy Spirit was also involved in creating the world. (Gene. 1:1-2).

- **God the creator** (Gen. 1:1)

The universe was created by God's powerful word. God created the visible world in all richness diversity and order. The word was created in **six days of divine work** concluded by the rest of the seventh day. Everything that God created was good. (Gen. 1:31).

- **God the savior** (Isaiah 43: 3/Exod. 14: 30-31)

God saves people from the cruel hand of death. The Israelites are the testimonies of this: for example:

- The release of the Israelites from Egypt.
- The drowning of the Egyptians army at the Red Sea. (Ex. 14:26-28)
- The world was saved by the Jesus.
- God saves people when they are in need.

- **God the judge** (Matthew 3: 9-10)

God gave people rules, to be followed to ensure a good relation between God and people and among human beings themselves. God therefore, judges our actions. He punishes/reprimands/rebukes those who go against the laws. Mathew 3 reports that the axe is ready to cut down the trees at the roots, '*every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down.*' Theretofore, external actions (fruits) speak louder than words. The Lords expects us to be seen by our deeds just like the tree is seen by its fruits.

- **God the father** (Lk. 11:2)

God is our father because he is full mercy and love. He is compassionate just like the father is with his own children.

- **God the provider (Divine providence)**-Exod. 16: 4-5/Gene. 22: 13-14

Since God is the father, then he works hard to ensure that creation is supplied with its needs. Examples on how God provided its people are as follows:

- ✓ God provided a lamb for Abraham at Mt. Moriah (Gen.22: 13-14)
- ✓ God provided Manna and quails to the Israelites in the desert (Exod. 16: 4-4)

B). BIBLICAL BELIEFS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

1. Jesus the incarnate (Math. 1:23/16:16/John, 1:14)

This is the union of the divine nature with human nature in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is believed to be sharing completely in divinity and in humanity (except for sin), Jesus Christ is believed to be the embodiment of God in human form. In other word, *incarnation is a doctrine that teaches that God became flesh, that God assumed a human nature and became a man in the form of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the second Person of the Trinity.* Christ was truly God and truly man. The union of the two natures has not resulted in their diminution or mixture; rather, the identity of each is believed to have been preserved. In this sense, Jesus is equal to God in essence and glory. Jesus was the manifestation of God on earth.

Events that show that Jesus is God

1. He accepted worship which was only done to God- Lk. 24: 52-53
2. He forgave the sins the power reserved to God only- Mk. 2: 5-7
3. He declared that God and Him are one (John 10: 30)
4. He spoke with authority as God.

Events that show that Jesus was a man (except sin)

1. He was weeping (John 11: 35)
2. He was getting angry
3. He was sleeping (Mk 4 :38)

2. Jesus as the savior

Jesus came to in order to save the world. Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice for humanity's sins. This is so because a creature would not have brought creatures into contact with God, because it in turn would itself need someone to effects this contact. Nor could an element of creation have been the salvation of creation, because it itself had also to be saved. With the death of Jesus on the cross, the OT practice of sacrificing animals came to an end. The public ministry of Jesus also shows how Jesus was saving people from sickness and demoniac possession.

3. Jesus as a king (John 1: 49)

Jesus is a king of kings, since he is a descendant of David. The title king is referred to as Lord (Kurios) in Greek. This title was used by Greeks to refer to the earthly kings and masters. Jesus is seen as the king by Nathaniel.

4. Jesus the messiah (John 1:1ff)

The word Messiah is a Hebrew word, 'Mashiach,' which means the 'anointed one.' In the OT it was used to mean to those who did the work of God like kings and priests. These people were anointed by prophets to show that they had been set apart to d God's work. For example, Samuel anointed King Saul and David. Moses anointed the sons of Aaron as priests.

Jesus was anointed by God from long ago to bring salvation to people. Jesus as a messiah came to in a humble way that most people did not know or recognize him. He was the suffering Messiah.

5. The resurrection of Jesus (Lk. 24: 1-8/John 5: 28-29)(Acts 1:1-10)

Resurrection is the rising from the dead of a divine or human being who still retains his own personhood or individuality though the body may or may not be changed. Christians believe that Jesus rose from the

dead. The resurrection of Jesus is the core or corner stone of Christian faith. The resurrection of Jesus guarantees the resurrection of the faithful departed Christians. (I Corinthians 15: 12-24).

6. The ascension of Jesus (Mk. 16: 19 / Acts 1: 6-10 /Luke 24:50-51)

Ascension is the departure of Jesus Christ from the earth going to heaven. It happened 40 days after his resurrection from the dead. The event occurred in the presence of the apostles; Christ was lifted up and a cloud took him and hid him out of their sight. The ascension took place at Bethany.

Significance of the biblical beliefs about Jesus Christ

- The death and resurrection of Jesus give hope to the Christians that they were saved and that there is life after death to those who are righteous.
- The life of Jesus Christ on earth proves that he was the awaited king from heaven. His leadership was unique and extra-ordinary unlike earthly kings. The divine nature of Jesus enabled him to perform miracles.
- Christians are heirs in God's kingdom through Christ the king.
- Christians are victors and conquerors of evil through Christ.
- Christians are called the sons and daughters of God through Christ.

C. Beliefs in the Second Coming (Parousia)/ second advent of Jesus.

(Luke 21: 25-28/Acts 1: 6-8; 1:10-11; James 5:8; Hebrews 10; 37)

This is the second return /coming of Jesus Christ in visible form to earth to judge humanity at the end of the world. (II Cor. 5:10).The second coming will be accompanied by the resurrection of the dead. (I Cor. 15: 35-44). But the hour and the day of the second coming is known by God the Father. (Matt. 25:13; Luke 21: 25-28;Mark 13: 3-13).

D) Beliefs in Judgment and Salvation. (Hebrews 9: 28).

The second coming of Jesus will be accompanied by judgment and salvation and where by Jesus will take all the **saints** (Those who have remained believing in him) into God's kingdom or eternal life.(John 14; 3)/ 5: 24. The righteous shall be resurrected to receive the reward (Revelation 20:4–6), but the wicked shall be resurrected to receive punishment (Revelation 20:11–15). The dwelling place of God is also called **Paradise**. Paradise is defined as a place where God and spiritual beings dwell, and the place (or condition) of perfect supernatural happiness for the redeemed (Believers) in the afterlife. It can also be defined as the joyful dwelling place of God and the believers and where eternal state exists.

The **wicked** will be cast into **hell**. This is the place or state of eternal punishment of the damned, whether angels or human beings. (Matthew 25: 44-46).

Between the time of the first coming and the second coming, it is the time where the gospel is preached and those who are believing are being saved and this salvation will be finally offered to them on the final day.

E.. Belief in life after death

Christians believe that life continues after death. Jesus told his disciples that he would die but he will rise from dead after three days (Luke 18: 31-34). Paul also preached about life after death against those who did not believe in it (I Cor. 15: 12-21). All people will rise from the death and that each one will go to hell or paradise.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BIBLICAL BELIEFS

- ✓ The second coming of Jesus helps Christians to live a watchful life and a holy life of pleasing God as they are waiting for Jesus, since, he will come the time we do not know. (

- ✓ Judgment and salvation helps believers to hold on to their faith in God and live a God fearing life in order to be saved enter into paradise. And those who are wicked they repent and ask God to save them.(Rev. 22:12-15).
- ✓ Life after death gives hope to Christians that death is not the end of everything but it is the gate way to another life. (I Cor. 15:20-24)

BIBLICAL PRACTICES

Biblical practices refer to the kind of behavior that are from the Bible and are done by different churches/denominations. Some of these practices are done using symbols and these symbols have values and meanings. A **symbol** can be defined as *any physical substance or element that represents the spiritual meaning being conducted*. Some of these practices are as follows:

1. Circumcision (Gene. 17:10-27/Lk. 2:21)

This is the operation of cutting away all or part of the foreskin (prepuce) of the penis. In Jewish religious tradition, infant male circumcision is required as part of Abraham's covenant with God. According to the Levitical law, every Jewish male infant had to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth, under penalty of ostracism from the congregation of Israel. Jews employ a *mohel*, a man who has the requisite surgical skill and religious knowledge to perform the rite. After a ritual prayer, the *mohel* circumcises the infant and then names and blesses the child. This practice marks the sign that one belongs to Jewish community, the people of God; hence, one is the descendant of Abraham.

In some African communities, circumcision is a rite of passage. This means one becomes an adult and is accepted into the community. It also gives one the right to marry and own property.

Currently, this practice is mostly done in hospitals to both young and adult. When the wounds have been healed, children are presented to the church to be given Christian guidance.

2. Naming (Lk. 2: 21)

Every name has a meaning attached to it. Names are traditionally used to designate men and others are used for women; a number of names can be used for either sex. Again, some names identify people with communities they belong. Some names are given according to circumstances or the job of the child. In Judaism, naming and circumcision were done at the same time. This means naming was done eight days after birth. Some of the meanings of the Biblical names include:

- ✓ Isaac- 'laughter'
- ✓ Abraham-'father of the nations'
- ✓ Jesus-'Yahweh saves'
- ✓ Michael-'who is like God.'
- ✓ Joshua-'Yahweh saves.'

3. Baptism (Math. 3:1-7)

This is where one is immersed in water or water be poured over the head or few drops of water be sprinkled on the head. Water stands for cleansing the sins of a person.

Water has been used as a symbol of purification in many religions at a very early date. In the ancient world, the waters of the Ganges in India, the Euphrates in Babylonia, and the Nile in Egypt were used for sacred baths.

Among Judaism, water has been used for the ritual cleanliness (Leviticus 11:25, 40; 15:5-7); and Elisha commanded the Syrian commander Naaman to dip himself in the Jordan River to be cleansed of leprosy

(see 2 Kings 5). Well before the 1st century AD, converts to Judaism were required to bathe (or baptize) themselves as a sign of entering the covenant. Some of the later prophets envisaged that Jewish exiles returning home would cross the Jordan and be sprinkled with its water to cleanse them of sins prior to the establishment of the kingdom of God (see Ezekiel 36:25). John the Baptist urged Jews to be baptized in the Jordan for the remission of sins (see Mark 1:4). the [Gospel According to Matthew](#) portrays the risen Christ issuing the “[Great Commission](#)” to his followers: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20).

Today, the forms and rituals of the various churches vary due to differences in school of theology and understanding on baptism. But Baptism almost invariably involves the use of [water as a symbol](#) and the use of [Trinitarian invocation](#), “I baptize you... in the name of the **Father**, and of the **Son**, and of the **Holy Spirit**.” Water stands for cleansing the sins of a person. Hence, one is purified. In Christian cycles, baptism is a sign that one has become a child of God. Therefore baptism is symbolized by water. Baptism is only done once in a person’s life though others repeat.

Who should be baptized?

Churches and denominations baptize infants the young and adults for various reasons:

- **Infants** and **young** are baptized due to the faith of their parents, but further instructions are given as they are growing up. Infants are also baptized in the church, following the Jewish understanding that even the youngest children belong to the covenant community, hence, they were circumcised.
- **Mature people** have to declare their faith and repent their sins. They have to promise that they will live in obedience to Christ’s commandments.

4. Holy communion (Exodus 12:1-28/Mk. 14: 22-28)

This practice has several names:

- Eucharist-from Greek word, ‘eucharistia,’ which means thanksgiving (for what Jesus did to save humanity.)
- The Lord’s Supper or the Last supper. (Mk 14: 22-26)/Luke 22: 14-23. This is the last Passover meal which Jesus took just before his death
- Breaking of the bread
- Mass, which means sacrifice to God. This is the memorial in which the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are sacramentally reenacted.

The practice of Holy Communion came from Passover where Jewish people celebrated the saving act of God where the Israelites were spared from the angel of death In Egypt. This meal united the Israelites as the chosen people of God.

How the Passover was celebrated? (Exodus 12: 1-28)

- Each family killed a lamb
- Its blood was put on the door posts of the house
- It was eaten while everyone has stood up and dressed as if they are on the journey.
- Unleavened bread, bitter herbs and wine were taken.

Jesus took the Passover before he died. During this ceremony, which was called the last supper or the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is symbolized by the **blood** and the **bread**. Jesus gave bread to his disciples to eat as his body. He also gave wine to his disciples to drink as his blood. (Mk 14: 22-26). The cup of wine stands for the blood of Jesus which was shed on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. It also stands for the sealing of new covenant. The bread stands for the body of Jesus which was broken for people.

Eucharist or Lord's Supper is central rite in most of the Christian churches. During the ceremony, the bread and wine are consecrated by an ordained minister and consumed by the minister and members of the congregation in obedience to Jesus' command at the Last Supper, "Do this in remembrance of me." Many churches regard it as a sacrament which both symbolizes and effects the union of all members to Christ.

Jesus took the Passover before he died. During this ceremony, which was called the last supper or the Lord's Supper, there was no lamb, since Jesus himself took the place of the lamb. He gave bread to his disciples to eat as his body. He also gave wine to his disciples to drink as his blood.

When Christians celebrate the Holy Communion, they are united with each other and with Christ as the head. It also symbolized the deliverance from the bondage of sin.

5. PRAYER, FASTING AND WORSHIP

From time immemorial, people have been communicating to supreme beings through prayer, fasting or worship. In the OT, the Israelites prayed, fasted and worshipped God for various reasons.

a) Prayer

Prayer can be defined in several ways:

- ✓ It is a communication with God the father and creator.
- ✓ It is the lifting up of our minds and hearts to God.
- ✓ It is turning our attention to God because we need to talk to him.
- ✓ It is a conversation with God through which we establish or build friendship and better relationships between God and ourselves.
- ✓ It is an elevation of our soul to God to offer Him our homage and ask his favors in order to grow in holiness for his glory.

Reasons why people pray

- To ask for favors.
- To honor God, since, He is our creator; hence, it helps us not to be presumptuous.
- To ask his protection especially when we are on a journey.
- To confess our sins and seek for forgiveness.
- Others pray to intercede on behalf of others. For example to plead for someone who has done wrong to God to forgive that person.
- To thank God after God has done wonders to them or has given them good things (C.F Psalms 117:1-2).
- Others pray to get consolation when they feel troubled.

- Others pray to get healed from physical, spiritual and emotional ailment (illness).

NB: People can pray in various ways:

- Mentally- in silent (I Cor. 14: 15)
- Vocally- this can be done either in private or in public such as in a church.

In the NT Jesus discourages loudness when praying that amounts to babbling. Instead, Jesus prefers people to pray in secret (Math. 6: 6-8). This is so because God already knows what we need. Intimate relationship with God is established when one does the following when praying:

- Respect
- Reverence
- Perseverance and persistently
- Humble spirit and a contrite heart

In the NT, Jesus gives us a model of prayer which is called the Lord's Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer (Lk. 11: 1-4/ Mt. 6: 9-13)

We call this "The Lord's Prayer," because Jesus taught it. This is a "pattern or model prayer of all prayers," given to guide us in our own praying. It teaches us that true prayer depends on a spiritual relationship with God that enables us to call Him "Father." Jesus wanted Christians to know that when they are praying, they have to pray for the following:

- The kingdom of God to come down to earth so that righteousness and peace should reign.
- Asking God to give them daily bread. This is so because God is the provider and our father.
- They have to ask God to forgive their sins. This is so because humanity is prone to sin and concupiscence (desire to do evil). People sin in various ways: by action, omitting or by words. Whenever we sin, we break the relationship with God.
- It also teaches us to forgive our sins if we want God to forgive our sins.
- It also teaches us that we should pray that we should not fall into temptation. This is so because the world is full of trials and temptations. Christians have to pray that they have to make right choices on their way.

In summary the Lord's Prayer has the following aspects:

- ✓ Praising the Lord
- ✓ Thanksgiving
- ✓ Confessing the sins
- ✓ Petitioning God-asking God for something from God.
- ✓ Intercession

To sum up a true prayer should have the following aspect:

- It should be sincere
- Definite (ask what you want)
- Asking the will of God
- Asking the forgiveness of God
- It should glorify God
- It should thank God for His benevolence toward the creation.
- One should ask for his/ her provision.

B) Fasting

This is an act of self denial where one denies food, drinks or pleasures that one fancies during the normal life. It can also be defined as an act of abstinence from food or drink or both for ritualistic or other religious or ethical purposes. Fasting has been practiced from antiquity worldwide by the founders and followers of many religions. Individuals or groups also fast for various reasons such as an expression of protest against what they believe are violations of social, ethical, or political principles.

Religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam emphasize fasting during certain periods. To these religions, fasting is regarded as a form of prayer whereby one reflects on his or her spiritual life. Among Jews, fasting as a form of penitence and purification has been observed annually on the Day of Atonement. On this holy day neither food nor drink is permitted. Anglicans and Catholics fast before partaking of Holy Communion, on Ash Wednesday, on Lenten season (40 days) and on Good Friday. Moslem fast during the month of Ramadan, this is also a form of atonement. Other dominations fast on certain occasions.

Fasting in Old Testament: fasting among the Jews

Among the Jews, fasting was a form of **penitence (atoning the sins)** and **purification**. It was accompanied by wearing of sackcloth, they were putting on ashes, and they were mourning.

Days of fasting

1. It was observed annually on the **Day of Atonement** (Yom Kippur). On this holy day neither food nor drink is permitted. The fast by day, but not after dark. (Leviticus 16: 29-31/23: 26-32/Numb 29: 7). It was happening on the tenth day of the seventh month. On this day, the Jews believed that God would forgive all their sins.
2. Situations that made Jews fast:
 - **In time of distress or war.** They fasted in war, or at the threat of it. Israel fasted at Mizpah in the Philistine war (**1 Sam 7:6**)
 - **They fasted when loved ones were sick:** David fasted and wept for his son.
 - **They fasted when loved ones died:** The men of Jabesh-Gilead fasted seven days for Saul (**1 Sam. 31:13; 1 Chron 10:12**) David and the people fasted for Saul and Jonathan (**2 Sam 1:12**)
 - **They fasted when they sought god's forgiveness:** Moses fasted forty days because of the sin of Israel and Nineveh fasted at the preaching of Jonah (they also included the animals in their fast - cf. (**Jonah 3:4-10**))
 - **They fasted when faced with impending danger:** King Jehoshaphat fasted when threatened by Edom (**2 Chron 20:3**). Ezra led a fast when seeking the favor of God toward his return from exile (a journey fraught with danger) (**Ez 8:21**). The Jews fasted when they heard that Haman had obtained the king's decree against them (**Esth 4:3**); Esther and Mordecai fasted before she went before the king- (**Esth 4:16**)

Fasting in the New Testament as it is taught by Jesus Christ and his disciples

First of all, Jesus approves fasting but he does not expect people to mourn or show disfigured faces (Matt 6: 16-18). People should fast when an occasion calls for it, but when fasting one should be joyful. Jesus taught that Fasting is important when one is preparing to cast out demons. Fasting should also be accompanied by prayer. This means there are times when faith alone is not enough. At these times prayer joined with fasting is necessary, hence, fasting joined with prayer may accomplish things which normal faith may not

(Acts 13: 1-3; II Corinthians 11: 23-28).

The length of fasting

1. For **ONE DAY**, from sunrise to sunset, and after sundown food would be taken - Judg 20:26; 1 Sam 14:24; 2 Sam 1:12; 3:35
2. for **ONE NIGHT** - Dan 6:18
3. for **THREE DAYS** - Esth 4:16
4. For **SEVEN DAYS** –at the burial of Saul, the people of Jabesh-Gilead fasted seven days - 1 Sam 31:13; 1 Chron 10:12; David fasted **SEVEN DAYS** when his child was ill - **2 Sam 12:16-18**.
5. The longest fasts recorded in Scripture were **FORTY DAYS** by Moses, Elijah, and Jesus - Exodus 34:28; Deut 9:9; 1 Kings 19:8; Mt 4:2; Lk 4:2

WARNINGS CONCERNING FASTING...

1. *Fasting is an empty formality if done by persons who lives immoral lives*
2. *Fasting can easily turn into an external show and ceremonial ritualism.* For example the people complained that they had fasted and God had not seen - (**Isa 58:3-9**). In contrast to simply an external display the Lord said:
 - 1) Loose the bonds of wickedness
 - 2) Let the oppressed go free
 - 3) Share bread with the hungry
 - 4) Bring the poor into one's house
 - 5) Cover the naked.
3. *Fasting without true repentance defeats the purpose of fasting.*
4. *Fasting is fruitless when done for the wrong reason.*

examples of people from the Bible who fasted:

1. Anna the prophetes - **Lk 2:36-38**
2. Saul - **Acts 9:9**
3. Cornelius - **Acts 10:30-31**
4. Daniel-
5. King David
6. Anna the prophetess
7. Prophet Elijah
8. Jesus Christ
9. Queen Esther. 10. Paul (II Coll. 6:4-10)

C) **WORSHIP (adoration)**

Since the time immemorial, humans have been religious and have been in touch with their creator who is God. There is relationship which exists between the creator and his creation, the people. People become in touch with their creator through worship. **Worship** means giving respect to God by relating with right attitude. It can also be defined as an act of submitting ourselves to God and giving him the highest honor and respect. People can worship God either as an individual or as a group. In worship, people sing, meditate, offer sacrifices such as lambs, goats, and calves. They also offer incense. In Israel, a burnt offering was offered. Those who offered sacrifices were to be sincere. God does not want hypocritical worship (Isaiah 1:1-16).

Worship in Old Testament

- In OT worship was somehow free as an individual worshipped God at their own place of choice. (Gen. 22:5; 12:8).
- When the Israelites got established, worshipped was a communal activity not an individual activity. (Ex. 20: 24-26).
- Later God instructed the Hebrews to have priests from the family of Levi (Levites priests). These were to guide the people in worshipping God in the temple. During this time. Worship involved singing. Reading the Law and giving sacrifices in form of animal, oil, frankincense and flour.
- Then rules and regulations on how to worship came though the book of Leviticus. (1; 1ff).
- Worship was done first in the tent and later in Jerusalem Temple. Both the tent and the temple had sacred vessels for worship which include the Ark.

Worship in NT. (How the early Christians practiced worship)

- The early Christians worshipped in God in the temple and in the synagogues. (Acts 2: 46).
- Their worship did not include the sacrifices according to the Jewish Law explained in the book of Leviticus. To them Jesus had ended the sacrifices system as he was given out as the last supper on the cross. (Hebrews 10: 11-12).
- The sacrifices they gave were called offerings.
- Their worship was in two ways:
 - *First, they could assemble* together to worship God through teaching the word of word and pray.
 - *Second, they lived the word which was* practicing the new way of their lives in Jesus.. This was seen in their common sharing (Acts 2: 44) and their bodies were holy. They also gave offerings to support God's work (I Cor. 16: 2-3).
 - Later, due to persecution, worship was done in homes.

FEATURES OF WORSHIP IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- Sacrifices which were in the form of an animal, crop or oil.
- Altar which was a place for sacrifice.
- Sacrifices (Exodus 25: 1-2)
- Priests who were the intermediary between God and Man.
- Teaching of the Torah which is the first five books of the Bible.
- Special place of worship which was the temple and synagogues.

NB: the liturgy of synagogue worship had the following components:

- Litany which was the opening prayer.
- Confession.
- Intercessory prayer.
- Scripture reading (from the Law/Torah).
- Preaching.
- Benediction (blessings).

NB: The OT has sacrifices and dwelt on Torah.

FEATURES OF WORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (Early Christian communities)

First of all the early Christians stopped worshipping in synagogues because of persecution, instead, they met in homes. The Jewish priesthood was abolished as everyone could do God's word and talk to God.(I Peter 2:9). The following are the features of Early Christian communities.

- Preaching the word of God.
- Praying together. (Acts 3:1)
- Taking the Lord's supper (I Cor. 11: 23-27)
- Offering (I Cor. 16: 1-2)
- Water baptism.

NB: The early Christian communities had priesthood of all believers and leaned much on the way of Jesus rather than the Jewish traditions.

Reasons why people worship God



Thanksgiving

People thank God for the countless blessings, benefits and gifts they receive from God. Jesus was disappointed when nine of the lepers he had healed did not thank him, except only one. Therefore, a well mannered person will be grateful and will say thanks to good things he/she gets from someone.

2. adoration

This is where one acknowledges God's love and care for all people, hence, one respects God by falling to the ground and prostrate oneself or by kneeling with the right hand on the chest.

3. Protection

Others worship God when faced with many dangers, hence, one looks for protection. One also seeks for protection when going on a journey. One looks for the mercy of God to alive alive. For example, Jacob prayed for God's protection against Esau (Gene. 32: 9-12).

4. Wisdom

Wisdom is needed by many people to manage their lives properly. For example:

- Students pray to pass examinations.
- Parents pray to handle their families properly and also for their children to grow and walk in wisdom of the Lord.
- Teachers pray to have skills of imparting knowledge in the learners.
- Teachers pray to have skills of imparting knowledge in the learners.
- Christian judges pray to handle cases justly.

5. Guidance

Christians also worship God to guide them in their daily activities. For example, the early Christians asked for the guidance of the Holy Spirit when they were about to choose Matthias, the successor of Judas Iscariot.

6. Marriage (Genesis 2; 18-24)

What the Bible teaches about marriage

The Bible says Marriage is the life commitment of living together between a man and a woman under God's instructions. Married partners are obliged to live together in an undivided partnership till death (Matthew 19:5-6)¹³⁶. **Marriage was first instituted** by God when he created Eve for Adam. (Gene. 2: 21-23). A woman was created as a suitable companion for man (Genesis 2: 18). God saw that it was not good that a man should not be alone. **The marriage covenant** entails that a man and a woman will stay together until death.

What the Bible teaches about composition /state of marriage partners.

The Bible teaches that the marriage is composed by a man and a woman who are mature, independent of their parents. The parents have the roles of helping their children settled in a marriage. They have to advice their children properly on how they should fare in getting married properly.

What the Bible teaches about Characteristic of marriage: the role of love to marriage.

Marriage is characterized by **love**. Love binds the two partners. The couples cannot come together unless they are in love. A man is supposed to love his wife just like he loves his body (Eph. 5: 28). The husband has to initiate love to the wife and the wife has a role to reciprocating the love by being submissive to her husband. But this does not mean that the man is the boss. Couples have to follow the order of creation, thus the woman be under a man. However, being the head does not b mean being oppressive. A man and a woman were created in the image of God. Love is different from lust. **Lust** is the strong physical desire to have sex with somebody usually without feelings of love or affection. Lust is selfish and short lived. Love is sacrificial and giving (I Cor.13: 4-7).

NB: In societies in which individuals choose their own partners, young people typically **date** prior to marriage. Dating is the process of spending time with prospective partners to become acquainted. When dating becomes more serious it may be referred to as **courtship**. Courtship implies a deeper level of commitment than dating does. During courtship the individuals specifically contemplate marriage, rather than merely enjoy one another's company for the time being. Courtship may lead to engagement, also known as betrothal—the formal agreement to marry. A woman who is engaged is known as the man's fiancée, and the man is known as the woman's fiancé. Men typically give an engagement ring to their fiancée as a symbol of the agreement to marry.

People tend to date and marry people with whom they have characteristics in common. Thus, mate selection typically results in homogeneous marriage, in which the partners are similar in a variety of ways.

QUALITIES /FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A PARTNER

1. **Education status-** one who has a similar level of qualification as yours is important for easy understanding.
2. **Health status-** health problems must be known during courtship for one to make good decision to get married or not.
3. **Religious affiliation.** For the sake of children and other issues, a partner of the same religious beliefs like you is good.
4. **Sociability-** partners must know if one is introvert or extrovert. This is means; one has to know if one interacts with others, relatives or strangers.

¹³⁶ And said, '**For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be united with his wife, and the two will become one flesh'**? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

5. **Emotional status.** One has to know how the other partner reacts to things and situations. In short one has to know the temperament of the other partner.
6. **Skills and knowledge.** In rural areas, girls and boys look for somebody who has got certain skills such as skills to build houses or a woman who is able to cook.
7. Physical Appearance. One who has a good looking appearance (Gene. 39)

Certain practices are attacked to the process of getting married. These are:

- a) **Abstinence.** Abstinence means refraining from sexual acts until marriage. Premarital sex could result into pregnancy; hence, one may be forced to get married before fully prepared. For example Joseph In Matthew 2: 18-25, was contemplating in divorcing Mary since, was found with pregnancy outside the wedlock.
- Bride price.** It is also called dowry. Bride price is the property /money that a man or husband's family gives to the wife upon marriage or vice versa. In certain societies the dowry formed a part of an exchange of wealth between intermarrying families. For example, Jacob worked 14 years for Laban in order to marry Laban's daughter, Rachael. (Genesis 29: 15-30)
- b) **Cerebration.** This is where one officially gets married. Drinking and dances may be attached to marriage. For example, **John 2: 1-12**, we are told about the marriage in Cana.

NB: ways of entering into marriage:

1. **Christian celebration-** this is a celebration under Christian law by a priest or a minister in the church. It usually starts with bridal shower and the marriage is presided over by a Christian leader. Before marriage, there is **calling of banns (publication of banns)**. The callings/ of banns is done three weeks before marriage. The banns are there because it must be established with certainty that there are no obstacles to its validity. In other countries, the publication of banns is done in public media. The faithful are to reveal any impediment prior to the celebration of marriage. After the weeding engagement, the two become a wife and a husband. The church recognizes the marriage as valid. Usually, many churches give certificate to the couple which comes from the government. The certificate certifies that the marriage is accepted by the government, the church and the community. (Prov. 18: 22).
2. **Traditional celebration (customary)**
3. **Civil marriage/ Registry Marriage-** this is where couples conduct the ceremony in a registry office where government officials officiate instead of religious leaders. The appointment must be made at least three weeks before so as to give an allowance of objections before the actual marriage. Both parents from both sides must be available during the ceremony. The ceremony takes place in a registry office with an authorized government officer.
4. **Elopement**-this is when a man and a woman arrange secretly to get married without going through marriage ceremony.
5. **Co-habitation-** This is when a man and a woman live together in a house even having children but are not officially married.

CHRISTIANITY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Contemporary means something that is happening or existing now. Therefore, contemporary issues are things that are of concern now and are affecting people now and again. Some of the contemporary issues are gender issues drugs and substances abuse and Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

a. Gender issues in the Bible

Due to cultural circumstances of the past, the Bible was written mostly *by men about men*. Most biblical interpretation over the centuries was also done *by men for men*. As a result, women's perspectives (including stories

about women and/or by women) have often been neglected. However, a careful reading of the Bible, uncovers many stories in which women play very significant roles. Some women played roles just like men did. In short women also played a role in the work of spreading the Good News. Some of the areas in the Bible where women are involved just like men are as follows:

1. Leadership skills

The Bible reports how men and women were involved in the leadership. For example:

- a) **Deborah.** This woman was both a judge and a prophetess. She helped the Israelites in the battle against the Canaanites. She did this in conjunction with Balak, her commander.
- b) **Mirriam.** This woman was the sister to Moses and Aaron. She was a poetess and a prophetess.
- c) **Huldah-** this woman was a prophetess. She gave the message to King Josiah that God has changed his mind of punishing Judah just because Josiah the King had repented (II Kings 22: 14-20)
- d) **Anna.** This woman together with Simeon played a prophetic role in the life of Jesus. These two predicted the roles of Jesus in future. They also predicted that Mary the Mother of Jesus will suffer upon seeing her son being led to be crucified.

2. Disciples

New Testament reports that women were very much involved in the discipleship. The Gospel of Luke does not hide the roles women played in the spreading of the Gospel.

- **Elizabeth** in her old age gave birth to a great prophet, John. Who prepared the way for the Lord.
- **Mary** gave birth to Messiah who saved the world. Angel Gabriel announced that Mary has found favour in the sight of God.

NB: these two women were exalted from their low state.

Other women became followers of Jesus

- **Mary Magdalene.** This woman witnessed the death and the burial of Jesus. She also discovers the Empty Tomb and tells the disciples. ([John 20:1-2](#))
- **Joanna.** This woman was the wife of Chuza. (Chuza was the steward of Herod).
- **Susanna** and other women provided Jesus and his disciples with their resources.

7. Fellowship

After the ascension of Jesus, most women became part of the disciples. They were all together devoted in prayer, fellowship and breaking of the bread.

The roles of women and men according to the Bible:

- a. Both can become leaders.
- b. Both are regarded as wise. For example, King Solomon and Deborah are portrayed as people of wisdom.
- c. Both are models in term of faith and holiness. For examples, Abraham (Abhram 11: 8-10) and Mary.
- d. Both are in the image of God. This means, they can communicate with God and are the most intelligent beings that God created (Gen 1:26).
- e. Both are equal in the eyes of God, hence, they complement each other. Procreation will be impossible without the presence and participation of men and women. God ordained men and women to marry each other and procreate (Gen 1:28).
- f. Both have authority over other living things. This means, they can take care and manipulate the environment. (Gen 1:26)

NB: In the OT times, especially in the Jewish society, women were not recognized and most of the times women were presented as:

- **Workers** ([Prov. 31: 10-31](#))
- **Channels of procreation.** To get impregnated and take care of the child.
- **Caretakers of the homes.**

DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ABUSE AND THEIR EFFECTS

A **drug** refers to a chemical substance when taken causes changes in the functioning of the body. It can also be defined as a substance or a chemical used for medical purposes in order to relieve pain or treat diseases¹³⁷. Examples of drugs include spirit, panado.

A **substance** is any kind of matter such as water, tobacco, alcohol¹³⁸.

To **abuse** means to use something wrongly.

From this explanation, the term **Drug and substance abuse means:**

1. Taking drugs not in the required dosage or not in appropriate amount and manner.
2. Taking a drug for other reasons apart from those intended by manufacturers.
3. It is the use or overuse of any drug in a manner that deviates its intended prescription.
4. The pattern of harmful use of any substance in which the user consumes the substance in amounts or with methods which are harmful to themselves and others.

NB: some drugs are used for **curative** purposes and others are misused to cause **psychological changes**. The drugs that are associated with abuse are psychoactive drugs. These drugs usually cause intoxication. This is the state of being mentally affected by a chemical. An intoxicated person experience serious changes in physical functioning, social functioning, emotional and economic functioning.

Psychoactive drugs produce their effects by acting on brain chemistry. Many people abuse drugs in three major ways:

1. By taking them **orally** (through the mouth). Here a drug has to dissolve, then goes into the blood stream, finally into the brain
2. Through **injection**. This is where a drug reaches the blood stream then goes into the brain. An injected drug reaches the brain faster.
3. Through **inhalation or sniffing**- This is where a drug reaches the lungs then into the blood stream, then into the brain. This method also makes the drug to reach the brain faster.

COMMON ABUSED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES

- Valium
- Alcohol
- Cocaine
- Petrol
- Heroin
- Indian hemp (marijuana)
- Mandrax
- tobacco

CAUSES/REASONS FOR PEOPLE TO INDULGE IN DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- a) **Peer pressure.** This is the influence one gets from those who are close to him such as friends. One can be pressurized to take drugs to enhance the relationship.
- b) As a **means of escaping frustrations and worries**. Some do this after failing exams or losing a job or a partner.
- c) **Relaxation.** Some abuse drugs to relax after an exhausting/heavy activity. ('kuzipepesa')
- d) **Curiosity**-some want just to find out how it feels like to take drugs.
- e) **Exposure to drugs and substances.** For example, a child can start taking liquor because his mother prepares it as a business.
- f) Copying from parents
- g) **Lack of parental care and support.** Some parents do not have time to advice and counsel their children. As a result, children feel ignored and find company among drug users.

¹³⁷ It can also be defined as a substance that affects the function of living cells, used in medicine to diagnose, cure, prevent the occurrence of diseases and disorders, and prolong the life of patients with incurable conditions.

¹³⁸ **tangible physical matter:** physical reality that can be touched and felt

- h) **Idleness.** People who have nothing worthwhile may engage themselves in drug and substance abuse. It is common to find jobless people in this trade.
- i) **Rapid population and social change.** The advent of democracy in Malawi has led people to abuse drugs as a way of enjoying their democratic rights.
- j) **Drive to independence.** Some abuse drugs as an expression of independence from parental authority.
- k) **Low self esteem.** Some abuse drugs because they think that they are useless in life and cannot achieve anything good.

EFFECTS OF DRUG AND SUBSTANCES ABUSE

Although drug and substance abuse may be perceived as good by users, it has serious effect on both the user and non-users and even on development.

A) Effect on individual (the user)-(C.F Genesis 19: 30-38.)

- Causes diseases e.g. liver damage due to alcohol intoxication, brain damage due to over use of drugs and chances of suffering from T.B or Cancer becomes very high.
- Impairment of the mind leading to impolite behaviours like rape, aggressiveness, violence. In other words, impairment can lead to injuries, accidents or contraction of STIs.
- Addiction. One is compelled to take larger and larger dose to achieve the same 'high.'
- Loss of jobs/families relations.
- Unwanted pregnancies.
- Poor performance in education/working places
- Impotence¹³⁹
- High crime rate such fighting, stealing.
- Death

B) Effects to non-users (family) and on the development

- Loss of money
- Low productivity because one is not involved in economic and development activities
- Loss of relaxation
- loss of well trained people due to death or insanity
- Low participation in development work since, drug users lose motivation to work.
- Low development as drug abusers miss more workdays due to addiction and illness.

Christian ways of curbing the abuse of drugs and substances

1. Avoid bad peers and being found in bad places.
2. By using leisure time and money very well. Money should be spent in buying necessities.(Isaiah 55: 2).
3. Parents should guide their children on the dangers of drugs.

¹³⁹**Impotence or Erectile Dysfunction**, in medicine, condition in which a man is unable to attain an erect penis that is rigid enough for sexual penetration or sexual satisfaction. Impotence should not be confused with premature ejaculation, loss of libido, or absence of orgasm; normally, when a man becomes sexually aroused, his penis increases in size, becoming erect and rigid, enabling sexual penetration. An average penis is between 7 cm (about 3 in) and 10 cm (about 4 in) long; when it is erect it increases in length to between 13 cm (about 5 in) and 18 cm (about 7 in). An erection occurs when the penis fills with blood. An erect penis contains six or seven times the blood volume of a flaccid penis. During erection, the rate of blood flow into the penis is greater than the rate at which the blood drains out, which leads to an accumulation of blood within the *corpus cavernosum* (cavernous spaces) of the organ. The process of erection is controlled by the autonomic nervous system.

4. Parents have to lead their children by examples.
5. Christians have to act in ways that are pleasing to God.
6. Engaging in productive activities.
7. Take medication as prescribed.
8. Civil education on the dangers of abusing drugs. (I Corinthians 15: 33)
9. Christians should not entice others into sinful acts. (Ephesians 5: 18).

HOW JESUS FULFILLED THE CONCEPTS OF MESSIAH, SERVANT AND LORD

○ **THE MESSIAH**

The word Messiah is a Hebrew word, '*Mashiach*', (Messiah) which means the '**anointed one**'. In Greek a person who was anointed was called *Christos* (Christ). In the OT it was used to mean to those who did the work of God like kings and priests. These people were anointed by prophets to show that they had been set apart to do God's work. Jesus was anointed by God from long ago to save the people from sins and also to bring salvation to people through his death. Jesus as a messiah came to in a humble way that most people did not know or recognize him. He was the suffering Messiah. This was contrary to the expectations of many Jews about the Messiah. Many people expected a political Messiah thus the one who will be against the Romans and that he will wage war against the Romans. There are several prophecies that were uttered in regard to the messiah. Psalms 45: 7/Mark 9:12.

CONCEPT OF THE MESSIAH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	CONCEPT OF THE MESSIAH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
✓ The Messiah would be called Immanuel (God is with us)-Isaiah 7:14	The messiah is called Immanuel (Math 1:23).. Jesus was born and lived among people and he was God with people- that is why he did not sin in his earthly life.
✓ The Messiah will bring light to those who are in darkness. (Isaiah 9: 2)	The Messiah brought light to those in darkness (Luke 1: 79)
✓ The Messiah was to save the people from their sins (Isaiah 53: 5)	Jesus died to save humanity (Acts 4: 12)

○ **LORD.**

CONCEPT OF THE SERVANT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	CONCEPT OF THE SERVANT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
✓ The Lord would be named the "Lord Our Salvation" (Jer. 23: 4-5)	
✓ The Lord will sit at the right hand of God...	Jesus was exalted and honored as he went up to heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. (Hebrew 10:12-13; Acts 2: 32-36)

○ **SERVANT**

The word servant means one sent to carry out the mission of his master Jesus accepted the sufferings in order to restore man to God. The servant obeys and serves.

CONCEPT OF THE LORD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	CONCEPT OF THE LORD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
✓ the servant would be despised and rejected (Isaiah 52: 13-15, 53)	Jesus as the God's servant was despised and rejected (Luke 22: 1-2). Jesus was not accepted wholly by the Jews but was despised as the Messiah. (Luke 23:1; 23)

CHRISTIANITY AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Contemporary means something that is happening or existing now and they concern the present situation. Therefore, contemporary issues are things that are of concern now and are affecting people now and again. Some of the contemporary issues are environment degradation and HIV/AIDS (Sexually Transmitted Diseases). Christians have the duty towards these issues.

A. ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION.

Environment refers to anything that surrounds us. It can also be defined as a natural condition such as land, air, water, in which people, animals and plants live. It is the same as what we call creation. The Book of Genesis speaks of a man as the ruler of creation (Genesis 2:15). But as time goes by humanity begun to abuse the creation, hence, putting at risk their own lives this is known as Environmental degradation. **Environmental degradation** refers to the destruction of the surroundings. For example;

- Cutting trees wantonly.
- Water pollution by chemicals.
- Air pollution by smoke which comes from burning of fossil fuels such as gas, exhaust from vehicles.
- Poaching. This is the illegal hunting of wild animals. The fauna is killed for food, medicine use and to get byproduct like ivory. This can lead to extinction¹⁴⁰ of species.
- Destruction of vegetation by bush fire.
- Overfishing. This refers to the act of fishing at a rate more than the fish can breed. The result is the extinction¹⁴¹ of fish species, since; both young and old fish are caught. Overfishing is also facilitated by the high demand for fish to feed the growing population.

CONSEQUENCES OF DESTRUCTION OF LIVING THINGS

- Deforestation results in more carbon dioxide left in the atmosphere thereby contributing to global warming¹⁴² which in turn leads to drought.
- Soil erosion and soil infertility. This occurs when the land is left bare. As a result, rich alluvial soil is washed away by running water (run off).
- Loss of biodiversity. A lot of species of living things get lost due to deforestation and poaching.
- Easy spread of diseases. Water and airborne diseases spread easily due to pollution. These diseases include, cholera, dysentery and tuberculosis (T.B)

Christian approach towards environmental degradation.

- ✓ Planting trees where they have been cut.
- ✓ Avoiding pollution and overfishing.
- ✓ Set fire breaks to protect tree from fire.
- ✓ BY having keeping domestic animals. This will prevent poaching
- ✓ By constructing fish ponds.

¹⁴⁰ The dying out or termination of a race or species. Extinction occurs when a species can no longer reproduce at replacement levels.

¹⁴² the phenomenon of increasing average air [temperatures](#) near the surface of [Earth](#)

B) HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS has devastating impacts especially in Africa and Malawi is not exception. The epidemic has affected people at various levels regardless of age, religion, ethnic, occupation. HIV/AIDS has either infected or affected a person in one way or another. Most people at least 70% catch HIV through sexual intercourse with an infected person. Few people at least 30% get HIV through other means such as using hypodermic needles, Mother to Child Transmission, blood transfusion. The first case of HIV /AIDS world wide/globally was discovered in 1981 among homosexual men and intravenous drug users in New York and California. Shortly after its detection in the United States, evidence of AIDS epidemics grew among heterosexual men, women, and children in sub-Saharan Africa. But in Malawi, the first case was in 1985 where 17 people were diagnosed with HIV.

Since, then, HIV has spread as a **pandemic** (a disease that has affected the whole world). Indeed, AIDS quickly developed into a worldwide epidemic, affecting every nation. Many people are contracting the virus daily (almost 6000 youths are infected with HIV each day throughout the world, with majority females) and most of these are in the productive ages of 14-29, and many people with the virus are unaware that they have the virus until the virus has done great damage to the immune system. Again, there is an increasing evidence that married men are more commonly infected outside marital relations, but women usually become infected by their spouses.

Cases of AIDS have been reported in every nation of the world, the disease affects some countries more than others. About 90 percent of all HIV-infected people live in the developing world. AIDS has struck sub-Saharan Africa particularly hard. Two-thirds of all people living with HIV infection reside in African countries south of the Sahara, where AIDS is the leading cause of death. In countries hardest hit, AIDS has sapped the population of young men and women who form the foundation of the labor force. Most die while in the peak of their reproductive years. Moreover, the epidemic has overwhelmed health-care systems, increased the number of orphans, and caused life expectancy rates to plummet. In other countries, HIV has reduced the life span from 70 to 41.

The number of people living with HIV or AIDS has continued to rise as the result of new drug treatments that lengthen life, such as ARVs. It is therefore important for people to be aware of how HIV/AIDS is spread and how it can be prevented to avoid continuous spread of the virus.

INDICATORS OF MORAL DECAY THAT LEAD TO THE SPREAD OF HIV/AIDS.

Moral decay in sexual activity is when sexual intercourse is not respected and is done loosely.

1. Prostitution/promiscuity.

This is the performance of sexual acts solely for the purpose of material gain.

People prostitute themselves when they grant sexual favors to others in exchange for money, gifts, or other payment and in so doing use their bodies as commodities. In legal terms, the word *prostitute* refers only to those who engage overtly in such sexual-economic transactions, usually for a specified sum of money. Prostitutes may be of either sex, but throughout history the majority have been women. Promiscuity is the behavior characterized by casual and indiscriminate sexual intercourse, often with many people. Promiscuity is also called Multiple Concurrent Partner (MCP).

This practice can spread HIV if one is positive.

2. Same sex marriage. This is when people of the same sex get married. One acts as a man and the other a wife.

This is a homogeneous marriage. For men the person is called gay and for women the person is called lesbians. Chances of Contracting HIV is high because they practice dry sex , hence, the skin is bruised and the cuts transmitted fluid which Passes on the virus. This is common especially to the gays.

3. Premarital sex. This is practiced by two unmarried people, that is a man and a woman or a boy and a girl. When done Without. a condom, chances of contracting HIV is high if one is positive.

4. Multiple sexual partners. This is when a person has several sexual partners and this puts him at risk of contracting HIV

if one of them is positive

5. **Extra marital sex.** This is when a married person has sex with someone who is not his or her spouse.

Chances of contracting HIV is high if one is positive.

6. **Watching of Pornography**

This is when watches pictures of naked people showing their sexual parts or doing sex. This encourages the one watching it to start Experimenting sex with different people or to do sex carelessly. This can put one at risk. hence, promoting Multiple Concurrent Partners.

7. **Drugs and substances abuse.** When one has takes drugs, one's reasoning becomes dull and one does wrong decision like raping. This can also spread HIV.

8. **Polygamy.** This is when one gets married to more than one wife. When of them is positive, the virus can spread to others.

Some of the illicit behavior that endanger one to contract HIV.

- Watching of pornographic pictures.
- Watching of television programmes by young people without censoring these programmes. Some films show people half naked, caressing their bodies in preparation for having sex and some having sex.
- Joining a company of peers with wrong values and priorities. The company could be of drug addicts, that likes drugs or that lives a high standard of life though they are not working. The peers can influence one to think wrongly.

Consequences of contracting HIV/AIDS

- ✓ Strain on both medical and financial resources to both families and government as they are taking care of the patients.
- ✓ Increase in the number of orphans as guardians and parent die leaving behind children.
- ✓ Long illness which in return retard development.
- ✓ Destruction of relationships since, one partner suspects the other partner that he/she was not faithful.
- ✓ Stigma and discrimination to those infected.

What does the Bible say about HIV/AIDS: Biblical teachings that help preventing HIV/AIDS

- Abstaining from sexual acts. Abstinence means refraining from indulging sexual acts. The youths should reserve sexual acts till they are married. Fornication is prohibited and it is evil. (Jude 1:7; I Cor. 5: 1; I Cor. 18; 2Acts 15: 29; Rev. 2: 21).
- Christian leaders should preach against adultery. Adultery can be caused by:
 - Lustful desire (Prov. 6: 20-35)
 - Trial marriages
 - Wife inheritance

NB: Married people and the unmarried should stand up for what is right than to fool around.

(I Cor. 7: 1-11; Prov. 5: 15-23).God created a man and a woman as one body.

- Drug abuse and alcohol abuse is condemned (Ephesus 5: 18). Drugs depresses the mind and makes one to make wrong Decision. This decision can make one to engage in unprotected sex.
- Pornography watching is prohibited, since, it makes one to have sex. Christians should not offer their bodies to sexual acts, since; our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Thess. 4: 3-8).
- We must not look a woman lustfully. (Job 31: 1) lamp to their path. (Lev. 18: 6-23, 30; Matt 5: 27:-30) (Prov. 5:1-11).
- Christians must acquire virtue and values against loose and foolish women and men who use tricks to trap them into sexual actions. (Prov. 7: 7-23).
- Christians should develop critical powers of judgment. They should sensor what they watch and read and not always practicing what they see or watch. (Prv. 5: 20-27).

C. THE CHURCH AND THE STATE.(Romans 13:1-7)

First of all **the church** is the group of believers in God who profess Jesus Christ as their Savior and the Lord.

The word ‘church’ comes from Greek word ‘Ekklesia’, which means an assembly of those who have been called out to worship Jesus Christ. A denomination is a part of the church, though a denomination refers to churches separately.

The state is the governing authority with all its structures in the community. It can also be defined as the body of persons authorized to administer the laws or govern a state. The state has a person as the top most leader while the church has God as the top most owner.

Both the state and the church influence the behavior of the people. For example, the church affects the behavior change of people on moral and religious values while the state influences the behaviour of people (citizens) to be economically independent. Both the state and the church are there to guide the welfare of the people thus both physical and social aspects. The religious leaders should guide the political leaders on how to govern well. In ancient Israel, when a strange situation arose, the king would consult the prophet to seek the God’s intervention. Similarly, in today’s world, the church is in the state and those in the state constitute the church. The two intertwine in their relationship.

The role of the church in the society.

1. The church plays an advisory role to the state. This happens when the church instructs the state in the affairs and by pointing out areas of correction. In Isaiah 7, we are told how King Ahaz was warned by prophet Isaiah.
6. The church prays for the leadership of the state
7. The church partakes in the role of development of the country. For example the Jerusalem Temple, was the center of worship and the center of education of the Jewish Law.
8. The church takes care for the vulnerable such as the widows and the orphans, hence, helping the state.

D. DRUG AND SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE

A **drug** is a substance or a chemical used for medical purposes in order to relieve pain or treat diseases¹⁴³.

Examples of drugs include spirit, panado.

A **substance** is any kind of matter such as water, tobacco, alcohol¹⁴⁴.

To **abuse** means to use something wrongly.

Drug and substance abuse means:

1. taking drugs not in the required or appropriate amount and manner.
2. taking a drug for other reasons apart from those intended by manufacturers.
3. It is the use or overuse of any drug in a manner that deviates its intended prescription.
4. The pattern of harmful use of any substance in which the user consumes the substance in amounts or with methods which are harmful to themselves and others.

COMMON ABUSED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES

- Valium¹⁴⁵
- Alcohol
- Cocaine¹⁴⁶
- Petrol

¹⁴³ It can also be defined as a substance that affects the function of living cells, used in medicine to diagnose, cure, prevent the occurrence of diseases and disorders, and prolong the life of patients with incurable conditions.

¹⁴⁴ **tangible physical matter:** physical reality that can be touched and felt

- Heroin¹⁴⁷
- Indian hemp (marijuana)¹⁴⁸
- Mandrax¹⁴⁹
- tobacco

Many people abuse drugs either by **orally** or through **injection** or **sniffing**.

CAUSES/REASONS FOR PEOPLE TO INDULGE IN DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

- a) **Peer pressure.** This is the influence one gets from those who are close to him such as friends. One can be pressurized to take drugs to enhance the relationship.
- b) As a means of escaping frustrations and worries. Some do this after failing exams or losing a job or a partner.
- c) **Relaxation.** Some abuse drugs to relax after an exhausting activity.
- d) **Exposure to drugs and substances.** For example, a child can start taking liquor because his mother prepares it as a drink.
- e) Copying from parents
- f) **Lack of parental care and support.** Some parents do not have time to advice and counsel their children. As a result, children feel ignored and find company among drug users.
- g) **Idleness.** People who have nothing worthwhile may engage themselves in drug and substance abuse. It is common to find jobless people in this trade.
- h) **Rapid population and social change.** The advent of democracy in Malawi has led people to abuse drugs as a way of enjoying their democratic rights.
- i) **Drive to independence.** Some abuse drugs as an expression of independence from parental authority.
- j) **Low self esteem.** Some abuse drugs because they think that they are useless in life and cannot achieve anything good.

EFFECTS OF DRUG AND SUBSTANCES ABUSE

Although drug and substance abuse may be perceived as good by users, it has serious effect on both the user and non-users and even on development.

- Causes diseases e.g. liver damage due to alcohol intoxication, brain damage due to over use of drugs / Health risks increase chances of suffering from T.B or Cancer
 - Impairment of the mind leading to impolite behaviours like rape, aggressiveness, violence and. In other words can lead to injuries, accidents or contraction of STIs.
 - Addiction. One is compelled to take larger and larger dose to achieve the same 'high.'
 - Loss of jobs/families
 - Unwanted pregnancies
 - Poor performance in education/working places
 - Impotence¹⁵⁰
 - High crime rate
-

¹⁵⁰ Impotence or Erectile Dysfunction, in medicine, condition in which a man is unable to attain an erect penis that is rigid enough for sexual penetration or sexual satisfaction.

- Loss of money which can lead to poverty
- Low productivity because one is not involved in economic and development activities
- loss of well trained people due to death or insanity
- Low participation in development work since, drug users lose motivation to work.
- Low development as drug abusers miss more workdays due to addiction and illness.

What does the Bible say on drugs and abuse?: Christian ways of curbing the abuse of drugs and substances

1. Avoid joining bad peers and being found in bad places. (I Corinthians 15: 33) ;(Psalms 1:1-2).
2. By using leisure time and money very well. Money should be spent in buying necessities. (Isaiah 55: 2).
3. Parents should guide their children on the dangers of drugs.
4. Parents have to lead their children by examples.
5. Christians have to act in ways that are pleasing to God.
6. Civil education on the dangers of abusing drugs. Genesis 19: 30-38¹⁵¹.
7. Christians should not get drunk (Ephesians 5: 18).

D. GENDER ISSUES

Due to cultural circumstances of the past, the Bible was written mostly *by men about men*. Most biblical interpretation over the centuries was also done *by men for men*. As a result, women's perspectives (including stories about women and or by women) have often been neglected. However, a careful reading of the Bible, uncovers many stories in which women play very significant roles. Some women played roles just like men did. In short women also played a role in the work of spreading the Good News. Some of the areas in the Bible where women are involved just like men are as follows:

1. Leadership skills

The Bible reports how men and women were involved in the leadership. For example:

- a) **Deborah**. This woman was both a judge and a prophetess. She helped the Israelites in the battle against the Canaanites.
- b) She did this in conjunction with Balak, her commander.
- c) Mirriam. This woman was the sister to Moses and Aaron. She was a poetess and a prophetess.
- d) **Huldah**- this woman was a prophetess. She gave the message to King Josiah that God has changed his mind of punishing Judah just because Josiah the King had repented (II Kings 22: 14-20)
- e) **Anna**. This woman together with Simeon played a prophetic role in the life of Jesus. These two predicted the roles of Jesus in future. They also predicted that Mary the Mother of Jesus will suffer upon seeing her son being led to be crucified.

2. Disciples-

New Testament reports that women were very much involved in the discipleship. The Gospel of Luke does not hide the roles women played in the spreading of the Gospel.

- **Elizabeth** in her old age gave birth to a great prophet, John. Who prepared the way for the Lord.
- **Mary** gave birth to Messiah who saved the world. Angel Gabriel announced that Mary has found favour in the sight of God
NB: these two women were exalted from their low state.
- **Mary Magdalene**. This woman witnessed the death and the burial of Jesus. She also discovers the Empty Tomb and tells the disciples. ([John 20:1-2](#))
- **Joanna**. This woman was the wife of Chuza. (Chuza was the steward of Herod).
- **Susanna** and other women provided Jesus and his disciples with their resources
- In Acts 1: 12-14, we are told that women together with apostles were praying for the guidance in the choice of Judas' successor.

¹⁵¹ Here Lot was drunk and had sex intercourse with his own daughters.

MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU AS YOU ARE PREPARING FOR YOUR EXAMS

'SO I RUN STRAIGHT TOWARDS THE GOAL IN ORDER TO WIN THE PRIZE....' (PHILIPPIANS 3:14 A)

ALL THE BEST!!!!

BY J. K. CHIWAYA

"There are many plans in a person's mind, but it is the counsel of the Lord which will stand" . PROVERBS 19:21

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END OF FORM FOUR WORK

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