

CRE FORM 3 NOTES

16.0.0 The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

17.0.0 Unity of Believers

18.0.0 Selected Old Testament Prophets and their Teachings

19.0.0 Amos

20.0.0 Jeremiah

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FORM THREE

SELECTED TEACHINGS FROM THE NEW AND THE OLD TESTAMENTS

TOPIC ONE: GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Learning Outcomes. By the end of this topic, you should be able to: -

- a) Discuss what Jesus taught about the role and gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- b) Describe the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in Christianity today.
- c) Identify the fruits of the Holy Spirit
- d) Interpret the message of Peter on the day of Pentecost.

LESSON ONE: TEACHINGS OF JESUS ON THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Read JOHN 14:15-26, 16: 5-15, and ACTS 1: 7- 8

Introduction

The Holy Spirit is the third person in the trinity. There is the power of Christ, the power of God, and the Holy Spirit who gives gifts such as prophecy and healing. The Holy Spirit is mentioned several times in the Bible; (1) during creation in Genesis, (2) at the annunciation of the birth of Jesus, (3) at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, (4) during baptism, (5) revelation of Jesus in the temple (6) Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit during his mission or ministry, after resurrection and before ascension

Learning outcomes. By the end of this lesson:

- a. State the role of Holy Spirit in the church and in Christian lives today
- b. Enumerate the gifts of the Holy Spirit
- c. Analyse the Manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the church and Christians today
- d. Give the role of love in church and in Christian lives today

- a. The role of Holy Spirit in Church and in Christian lives today.

Read JOHN 14:15-26 and JOHN 16: 5-15, ACTS 1: 7- 8

The Holy Spirit has many roles in the church and in Christian lives today. These roles are to:

- Teach Christians on a daily basis messages of Jesus
- Live in the hearts of believers of Christ
- Be an advocate, a counselor, helper and a comforter to those who love Jesus Christ and obey God's commandments.
- He would remind the disciples the words said by Jesus Christ and introduce them to their deeper meanings.
- Interpret the deeper meaning of the messages of Jesus Christ.
- Reveal the truth and mysteries of and about God.
- Affirm the right of Jesus as the Son of God.
- Reveal the glory of Jesus death.

- Reveal what is right and wrong
- Give the disciples of Jesus power to become witnesses of Christ.
- Give courage to the disciples of Jesus and modern Christians to face prosecution on the account of following Jesus.
- Enable the disciples to expose the secret lives and heart of sinful people.
- Guide Christians; help believers to cast away evils spirits, to heal, to preach the word of God, to encourage, and to condemn evil in the society.

b. Paul teaching about the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Read 1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13, and 14.

Spiritual gifts are extra-ordinary favors, talents, abilities, and dispositions given to Christians by God for the benefit of all believers. The gifts are used for the service of others and not for self-glorification and gratification.

The message of Peter on the day of the Pentecost

Peter told the disciple that what was happening was the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy.

- He said that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God.

- He said that the suffering and death of Jesus was according to God's plans.

Death was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

1. Gift of wisdom: – having deep understanding of issues- 'seeing far', being perceptive.
2. Gift of knowledge: – ability to understand the basic facts about Jesus, His mission and knowledge about spiritual issues.
3. The gift of faith: – refers to the confidence in God's help. It is deep trust in God.
4. The Gift of healing: – ability, and power to heal all forms of sickness by calling upon the name of Jesus Christ.

5. The gift of performing miracles: – gift of healing miracles, creative miracles for example, dead legs becoming alive.

6. The gift of preaching

7. The gift of prophecy: – the ability to interpret God's word. The ability to foresee what will happen in the future as revealed by God.

8. The gift of distinguishing spirits or discernment: – the ability to know whether a spiritual gift is from God, the Holy Spirit or from the evil spirit

9. The gift of speaking in tongues. The ability to utter, speak in a tongue, language unknown to the believer. Tongues are used when addressing God for self-edifications. It is personal growth.

10. The gift of interpretation of tongues: – the ability to understand and interpret the messages of those speaking in tongues.

11. The gift of love. (Read 1 Corinthians 13)

Paul stressed that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit are to be demonstrated with love. He stressed that love, a fruit of the Holy Spirit is supreme over other spiritual gifts possessed by Christians. It's the greatest of all. Speaking in tongues, preaching, and martyrdom without love is useless.

Components of Love

Love is patient, kind, not jealous or boastful, not arrogant or rude, is not ill mannered or selfish, and does not insist on its own way. It is not disrespectful. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in truth. It bears all things.

Love believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love is eternal. Love never fails. The other gifts are temporary but love, faith and hope are eternal.

c. Manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the church and Christians today

Gifts of the Holy Spirit have been manifested in churches today. We see this manifestation through people possessing the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For example, leaders in church have displayed the gift of wisdom. Preachers, and Christian's ministers have been casting out demons and performing healing. There are reported cases of interpretation of tongues and gift of prophecy in churches today.

When Christians display the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues the Holy Spirit is manifested. Other manifestations of the Holy Spirit are:

- Through healing, prophecy, gifts of discernment, boldness in preaching, and casting out demons among others
- Christians helping the poor by giving generosity and in kindness.
- Through singing, dancing, shouting (fruit of joy)
- Through unity of believes and fellowships.
- Through praying,
- Christian's persecutions/temptations.

d. Criteria for Discerning the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Christians who have the Holy Spirit and are guided by Jesus have certain characteristics. These are:

- They will confess that Jesus is Lord
- They cannot say a curse.
- They speak the truth. They worship God and behave in accordance with Jesus teaching.
- They led by the Holy Spirit and are known by the fruits of the Holy Spirit. These fruits are love, joy, peace, and patience.
- Such persons serve all Christians without discrimination and strife.
- They do not do sinful acts such as sexual immorality. They do not practice idolatry, and sorcery. They do not have in their hearts and minds hatred, and jealousy or any other negative feelings and actions.

e. The fruits of the HOLY SPIRIT (GALATIANS 5:16-26)

Paul taught that the fruit of the spirit are: Love, Joy, Patience, Long suffering, Goodness or Generosity, Faith and faithfulness, Peace, Meekness and kindness, gentleness, self-control and temperance.

Answer these questions after reading – JOHN 14:15-26 and JOHN 16: 5-15, ACTS 1: 7- 8 and 1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13, and 14.

1. What is the role of the Holy Spirit among Christians? (Read a)

2. Discuss the gifts of the Holy Spirit
3. Write a talk about the Holy Spirit
4. Define love?
5. Describe the different types of love
6. Why do Christians need the Holy Spirit today?
7. State the role of love in church and in Christian lives today.
8. How has the gift of the Holy Spirit been manifested in Christian lives?
9. Which activities show that the Holy Spirit is working among Christian in Kenya.
10. How have the gifts of the Holy Spirit been misused in the church today?

Answers are also in the text. Read sections with answers

1. The role of the holy spirit

An advocate, a counsellor and a comforter.

He would remind and introduce the disciples to the deeper meaning of the word of Jesus Christ.

To reveal the myth and mysteries of God.

He would affirm the right of Jesus as the Son of God.

He would reveal the glory of Jesus' death.

He would enable the disciples to discern and expose the secret heart of sinful men.

2. The gift of the Holy Spirit has been misused today by pride and public manifestation of the gift as a way of show off. Some Christians have misused the gift of Holy Spirit of prophecy by prophesying for money.

LESSON TWO. PETER'S MESSAGE ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST. Read ACTS 2: 14-41

Introduction

Jews commemorate Pentecost day. This is the day that God gave Moses his laws on mount Sinai. It is also referred to as the festival of weeks. Pentecost day was celebrated 50 days after the Passover. It was compulsory for all Jews. On this day, Jews brought offering, the first fruits of harvest, to the temple in Jerusalem.

Learning outcomes. By the end of this lesson You should be able: -

1. Describe Pentecost day
2. Narrate Peters' Message.
3. Explain the relevance of the Pentecostal Experience

a. Pentecost a day

On the Pentecostal day, the disciples were gathered in Jerusalem awaiting the promise of the Holy Spirit. And as promised, the Holy Spirit came in the form of a strong wind, and tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit rested on the head of each disciple. The disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit. They spoke in new tongues. Some of the observers mistook this experience. They thought that the disciples were drunk with wine.

Peter stood up to explain what was happening and defend the disciples. He told those who saw the experience that the disciples were not drunk. It was in the morning.

b. Peter's Message. Read Joel 2: 28 – 32

Peter told the onlookers that; what was happening is fulfillment of Joel's prophecies about the outpouring of Gods spirit. He said that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. This was proved by the miracles that Jesus performed. He emphasized that the suffering and death of Jesus was according to God's plans. Jesus is a descendant of David. Death and the resurrection of Jesus fulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament.

God raised Jesus from the dead. He taught that Jesus had both the nature of God and Man. The apostles are the living witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus has been exalted and sits on the right hand of God where He is Lord and Judge. The holy Spirit is a gift from Jesus

Peter then invited the listeners to repentance so that they could be forgiven and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Three thousand souls accepted salvation message and were added to the fellowship of the disciples.

c. After the Holy Spirit infilling.

The disciples sold their possessions and goods and assisted the needy. They did many wonders and signs. They continued to live in unity, worshipping God, fellowshiping together, and breaking the bread.

d. Lessons Christians learn from Leadership of Peter.

Christians should be:

1. Courageous and stand up for Jesus Christ all the times.
2. Ready to spread the Gospel of Christ.
3. Win new converts to Jesus by inviting them to repentance.
4. Have faith in the risen Christ.
5. Pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit like Peter and those in church leadership should take their roles seriously.

e. Relevance of the Pentecostal Experience

Speaking in diverse tongues signified that Christianity is a universal religion. It pointed out the importance of all languages when communicating to God. There were no specific languages for speaking with God, as it was when Latin was the language of literacy and Christianity.

Christians should be bold in their preaching. They should not be afraid as they have the counsel and helper, the Holy Spirit. Christians should understand that God chooses anyone as a leader, preacher, and witness of Christ.

Pentecostal experience signifies that Christians need to receive and be filled with the Holy Spirit

Revision questions

- a) Explain the meaning of the Pentecost
- b) Describe the manifestations of the holy spirit on the day of the Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-40)(or narrate the events that took place on the day of the Pentecost)
- c) Write down five teachings about Jesus from Peter's speech on the day of the Pentecost
- d) What were the qualities of peter that made him a successful leader of the apostolic church?

- e) What lessons can Christians learn from the events of the day of the Pentecost?
- f) State the teachings of Jesus on the holy spirit (John 14:14-26) (acts 1:7-8)
- g) What is the role of the holy spirit according to Jesus?
- h) What is the role of the holy spirit in the believers or the church or Christians?
- i) Outline the fruits of the holy spirit
- j) State the criteria for discerning the spiritual gifts
- k) List down the gifts of the holy spirit
- l) Explain why Paul taught that love is the greatest of all spiritual gifts
- m) Explain how the Holy spirit is manifested in the church today
- n) State ways in which the gifts of the holy spirit are being abused in the church today

TOPIC TWO: THE UNITY OF BELIEVERS

Learning outcomes. By the end of this topic, you should be able to:

- a) Explain teaching in selected New Testament texts of the unity of believers.
- b) Identify the metaphors used to describe unity of believers.
- c) Identify the causes of disunity in the early and modern church

LESSON ONE: TEACHINGS OF THE UNITY OF BELIEVERS IN SELECTED NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS

Unity of believers refers to oneness of those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

Learning outcomes. By the end of this lesson you should be able to: -

- i. Describe activities of early Christians
- ii. Describe characteristics of the people of God

iii. Explain the meanings of these symbolic expressions

- The body of Christ
- The Vine and the Branches
- The Church / Assembly of God
- The Bride

a. Early Christians

The early Christians in Jerusalem demonstrated their unity by.

- Holding joint prayer sessions
- Sharing the Lords supper, that is Eucharist.
- Sharing their possessions with the poor.

The showed oneness and unity as believers. They expressed their oneness using various terms, images, metaphors and symbols. They regarded themselves as the people of God, the church and an Assembly of God. When they celebrated the last supper, eating of bread was a symbol of the body of Christ. They saw themselves as belonging to one tree with the vine and branches. As followers of Christ, the early Church saw itself as the Bride of Christ.

b. Discussion of Symbolic Expressions

i. The people of God

Read 1 PETER 2: 9-10. Peter has outlined the characteristics of the people of God. He says that the people of God are

Believers in God: through faith in Jesus Christ.

The 'Chosen race', 'a royal priesthood', a holy nation' 'a chosen people'

Those who stand out from the rest because they live a holy and righteous life.

Form a Holy nation chosen to proclaim the works of God.

Not just the descendants of Abraham but people who follow Jesus Christ and His teachings.

ii. The body of Christ

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, and Ephesians' 4:1-12.

The Holy Spirit is the one who brings Christians together as one body of Christ to serve the church. Christians are given gifts for the purpose of sharing the body of Christ.

Jesus Christ is the head of the church. And just as the body has many parts, playing different roles, so has the Church. Every member of the church plays a vital role because different members have different spiritual gifts and callings. Some are Apostles, Teachers, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Miracle performers, Administrators and those who show mercy to others and encourage (exhort) others.

All church activities should be directed to the welfare of the church, just as the function of each part of the body is necessary for the well being of the whole body. To have a united body, members should be meek, and patient in order to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. For a church to be united, or to be considered as one body, Christians should have faith in God the father, one Lord Jesus Christ, one Holy Spirit and have faith in God through Jesus Christ.

iii. The Vine and the Branches

Read John 15:1-10

The vine represents Jesus. Vine tree was a tree that bore grapes. The vine tree was a symbol of prosperity and peace. Jesus is the vine and the Father is the vinedresser. Christians/ believers are the branches. They are expected to produce good fruits by remaining faithful and united in Christ. Faithful branches bear fruit like good Christians while unfruitful branches are like unfruitful Christians.

Christians should remain united to Christ who is the vine so as to bear fruits. The teachings of Jesus purify the Christians. The dead branches of the Vine trees are cut off and the living ones are trimmed or pruned. This is done so that the vines may produce high yields. Likewise unfaithful Christians, believers are rebuked and corrected so as to bear high yields.

iv. The Church or Assembly of God. Read Ephesians 5: 21 – 32

Church is a Greek word ““ekklesia””, which means people. People who belong to the Lord. Assembly of God is the coming together of people of diverse social and cultural backgrounds who recognize lordship of Jesus. The church is likened to the relationship between a husband and a wife. Christians (the church) are expected to be united with Christ just as a husband and wife are united in marriage. Just as husbands and wives are expected to love one another, so too, are Christians called upon to express love to one another and to love God.

A husband is the head of a family; Jesus is also the head of the church.

v. The Bride. Read 2 Corinthian 11: 2, and Revelations 21: 1 – 12

In the Old Testament, God calls Israel a bride. In the New Testament, Christians are referred to as “a bride’ in the New Jerusalem’. God or Jesus Christ is the bridegroom. Christians are reminded that the life on earth is a temporary home. Their real home is in heaven, the Holy city of God. Just as a bride is expected to be faithful to her husband, so are Christians expected to be faithful to God by observing the covenant way of life. Deviation from the covenant was portrayed as adultery.

John, who wrote the book of revelations, sees a vision of a new heaven and a new earth in which faithful Christians will be rewarded. Christ will come to take His bride to eternity to live there forever. The relationship between Christians and Jesus/ God is like a marriage. It is a covenant. It is a relationship where the church (bride) is expected to submit to God. Jesus died for the church, a show of His or God’s love. Likewise Christians should be committed in their relationship to God.

SAQ. 1. Discuss in twos who is a bride and what takes place in a wedding.

2. Discuss the significance of the symbols used to express the unity of the believers. These are “The people of God”, “The body of Christ”, “The vine and the branches” “The church or assembly of God” and “The bride”.

LESSON TWO: CAUSES OF DISUNITY IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The early church experienced some challenges, which led to divisions among the early disciples and Christians.

Learning Outcomes. After reading this lesson,

- i Identify causes of disunity in the early church
- ii State causes of disunity in the modern church
- iii Compare the causes of disunity in the early and modern church
- iv Suggest possible solutions to disunity in modern church

a. Causes of Disunity in the Early Church

After Jesus ascended to his Father and left the Holy Spirit to look after his followers, the disciples established congregations or communities to spread the Word of God. As believers of Christ met and prayed together, there were disagreements and divisions brought about by several factors and issues. These were:

Disputes, among early Christians; concerning leadership of the Church. Christians wanted different leaders: Paul, Apollos, Cephas or Christ. Paul told them that Christ couldn't be divided (1 Corinthians 1:10-21).

Sexual immorality was another cause of disunity in the early church. Some Christians were doing or having irresponsible sexual behaviours. These were incest, fornication, and prostitution. Paul condemned such behaviours and told Christians to stop sinning and honor God with their bodies. The body of a Christian is the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 5: 1-13, 6:12 – 20).

Christians settling disputes in civil courts. Paul advised they ought to talk over issues among themselves and agree to solve problems on their own (1 Corinthians 6).

Dispute over marriage and divorce. Some Christians were opposed to marriage. Others were encouraging divorce. Paul addressed these issues in 1 Corinthians, chapter 7:1-16. Paul advised Christians that it was okay to marry or not to marry. But marriage was needed to stop immorality.

Eating of meat offered to idols. Some Christians were eating meat offered to idols while others were against it. Paul advised Christians not to eat anything that will cause their faith to weaken or fail. (1 Corinthians 8 and 10: 14 – 20).

There were disputes about dressing during worship. Should women cover their head during worship? Should women shave hair? Should men wear long hair? (1 Corinthians 11:1-16).

Some Christians were overeating and over drinking during the Holy Communion – misuse of the Lord's Supper, (1 Corinthians 11:17 – 33).

Misuses of spiritual gift especially the gift of speaking in tongues. Paul taught that all gifts are equal (1 Corinthians 12).

There was a misunderstanding about the resurrection of the body and the dead. Some were saying there is no resurrection. Paul preached that if there is no resurrection then their preaching was in vain as they were witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15).

b. Causes of disunity among believers and church in Kenya today

Leadership differences. Some Christians are struggling for power. This has led to formation of splinter groups, divisions and enmity between these groups.

Cultural differences. Christians are divided by their African cultural beliefs from their backgrounds. This culture is merged with Christianity and Western cultural practices forming a unique mixture of beliefs.

Some Christians are permissive, while others are conservative. This has led to disunity, for example in the areas of dressing.

Discrimination. There is inequality within the church between the rich and the poor, the whites and blacks. Some Christians are viewed as more spiritual than others, on basis of the tribe, gender, wealth and social status among others.

Misuse of freedom of worship. Christians are starting splinter churches, probably because they want to control church finances without supervision by the wider church. To justify their departure, they spread propaganda against the 'mother' church, and other churches in order to attract followers. The more followers a church has the more tithes it collects.

Misuse of church funds. Some church leaders and followers misuse church funds

Differences in the practice of baptism

Arrogance and pride by some Christians.

Sins: sexual immorality in the church, divorce and marriage issues.

Some Christian denominations reject the human nature of the person of Jesus Christ; that Christ had both a human and divine nature e.g. Nomiya church.

SAQ. Can you think of factors that led to disunity among Christians in the early church that you have noted in the Kenyan church?

c. Reasons why Christians should work in Unity.

Christians face many problems and they therefore need to work together in unity to:

Promote oneness of Christians in Jesus Christ.

Promote the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Achieve effective evangelism or ministry.

Adopt a common attitude to the integration of African culture in worship.

Prevent the formation of splinter groups and cults.

Reduce the internal wrangling.

Have a common stand in dealing with issues affecting the society.

d. Possible Solutions to disunity

The church should settle issues that divide its members by Christians:

Learning to appreciate and respect the practices and belief of other Christian's denominations.

Having or forming a common goal

Striving to be guided by the principle of love in solving problems facing them.

Observing the teachings of disciples, prophets, apostles, God, laws of Moses, Jesus and the Bible.

Avoiding doing anything to their fellow Christians that would cause suffering and disharmony.

Activities that the early church did in order to remain united were that they:

Ate bread together.

Held fellowships together.

Shared with the needy.

Prayed together for each other

In the current worldwide Church, there is disunity amongst believers or Christians. The most common ones are due.

Leadership differences and wrangles for power.

Cultural differences amongst Christians.

Some Christians are permissive while others are conservative.

Differences in the interpretation of the Bible.

Misuse of church funds

Pride and arrogance.

Revision questions

- a. Write down terms used in the new testament to refer to believers in Christ
- b. Identify five causes of disunity in the church today
- c. Identify factors which cause disunity among the Christians today
- d. Discuss reasons why members of Christian families in Kenya find it difficult to harmoniously live together
- e. Explain how the church strengthens family relationships today

TOPIC THREE. TEACHINGS FROM SELECTED OLD TESTAMENT

PROPHETS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces one to the work of prophets in the Old Testament. In Form One, some prophets were taught e.g. Moses, Elijah, Nathan and Samuel. Traditional African prophets were also taught.

In Form Three, we compare true and false prophets and the Traditional African prophets.

Learning outcomes. By the end of the topic, you should be able to:

- a. Define a prophet, and prophecy
- b. Identify categories of prophets
- c. Explain the importance of prophets in Israel.
- d. Describe the characteristics of prophets.

e. Explain how prophetic messages were written.

f. Compare the relationship between prophecies in the Old Testament and the New Testament

LESSON ONE: PROPHETS

Learning outcomes. After reading this lesson, you should be able to: -

1. Give a correct definition of a prophet, and prophecy
2. List prophets in categories

a. Definitions of a prophet, and prophecy

The word prophet comes from a Hebrew word “Rabii” meaning ‘one who is called or one who announces God’s message. A prophet is also referred to as a seer. A prophet is a person sent by God to teach and give people messages about things to come in future from God. Prophets received divine messages from God and communicated them to the people.

A prophet is therefore a person who foretells events as revealed to him or her by God. Examples of prophets include Samuel, Elijah, Jeremiah and prophetesses (female prophet) Deborah, and Huidah.

Prophecy is a statement, a message of something that is going to happen in the future. The action of giving future messages is called prophecy.

b. Categories of prophets

There were many categories of prophets. These were:

a) Major Prophets. These were Prophet’s whose messages covered a long period of time. Their messages were long and detailed. For example Prophet Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

b) Minor prophets. There are 12 books of the Minor Prophets examples They are called minor because their messages are short, brief and do not contain detailed information. The Minor Prophets are Amos, and Hosea, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

c) Canonical prophets the term canon means law. Canonical prophets are law prophets. The individual utterances of these prophets are laws. Both minor and major prophets are canonical prophets,

d) The early prophets are Moses, Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha. These prophets belonged to guilds schools. Their prophecies are not recorded under their names. Their prophecies are written in books, which do not bear their names.

e) Cultic prophets like Hannah (N.T.) served in the places of worship. They assisted the priest officiating worship

f) Professional / court prophets like Samuel, Micah, and Gad lived together in the temple and in groups. They earned their living through their work. They did not work elsewhere

g) False prophets are pretenders to speak in the name of Yahweh but God did not call them. They spoke lies in accordance with the messages people wanted to hear.

c. Characteristics of true prophets

There were two (2) major categories of prophets in the Old Testament, (1) true prophets and (2) false prophets. True prophets are those whose prophecies occurred and were fulfilled. Prophecies of false prophets did not occur. True prophets distinguished themselves from false prophets and ordinary people.

They experienced God dramatically when He called them and in their ministry. They were God's spokesmen and women. They responded in faith to their call.

God gave them specific tasks in their commission and God's assurance and support in their ministry. They urged people to repent and turn back to God.

In their messages, they taught that God demands sincere worship and not elaborate rituals. They understood God and taught about God righteousness, goodness, mercifulness, and loving care. They condemned evil in the society and proclaimed God's judgment and punishment to those who failed to keep the covenant. They spoke with authority and acted with courage. They upheld God as a universal God for all nations. They talked of a remnant that shall remain after punishment or those that have continued to worship God sincerely. Their utterances were true because they were fulfilled

They spent a lot of their time in prayers. They prayed regularly. At such times they withdrew from people in order to have a quiet time to seek God.

All the true prophets received opposition from their audiences and they were ready to suffer for telling God's word.

d. The Characteristics of false prophets.

Some of the prophecy of false prophets contradicted prophecies of the true prophets. False prophets followed their own imaginations, and gave false hopes. They told people what they wanted to hear.

They had no personal knowledge of God. Hence, their prophecies were not in line with the divine revelations.

They used evil forces such as magic, and divinations to call upon the spirits of the dead. They were paid for prophesy and benefits materially from their clients. They served Baal and were mainly immoral. They committed crime.

Review questions

How can we know true and false prophets today?

LESSON TWO: IMPORTANCE OF PROPHETS IN ISRAEL

Introduction

Learning outcomes. After reading this lesson, you should:

1. Describe the work of prophets in Israel
2. Explain how God communicated with prophets and Israelites
3. Analyse the content of the Prophetic messages

1. Work of prophets in Israel

Prophets kept Israelites in communication with God. They communicated God's will to the people of Israel. They foretold God's judgments and punishment for sinners. They condemned the behaviour of the rich towards the poor. Through their messages, people reformed their lives since they condemned all forms of social evils and ritual sins.

They contributed to the writing of their messages leading to the compilation of the Bible.

Prophets guided and gave people hope. They taught people the laws of God. They warned people of dangers to come. They condemned idolatry and stressed the worship of one true God, Yahweh.

They anointed the Kings in Israel. Kings consulted the prophets before any major undertaking such as war among others.

They acted as conscience of kings. They advised them and challenged Kings when they went wrong.

2. God's communication with prophets and Israelites

God communicated to Prophets through visions, voices that were audible and clear, events, prayers, dreams, signs, ordinary things, and words which came to their minds with great power.

Writing messages of the prophets

The canonical prophets as mentioned earlier had their works and prophecies recorded under their names. Canonical prophets are referred to as writing prophets. It's possible that some prophets wrote down their own prophecies. They wrote what God spoke to them as He dictated. An example is Jeremiah who wrote what he was told ...'Get a scroll and write on it everything that I have told you about Israel, Judah and all nations. (Jeremiah 36:2, Isaiah 30:8).

Two, the prophet's message were probably written by other people. These were their assistant, secretary, scribe, and disciples or followers as the prophet prophesied.

Thirdly some of the prophetic messages could have been preserved as oral traditions and later written as books. A good example is 2 Kings.

e. Content of the Prophetic messages

Prophetic messages contained lessons from God to Israel. For example, the:

- i. Prophetic sayings were and still are oracles or poetic passages spoken by God himself through prophets. The prophecies were addressed to different nations. They carried specific teachings to the people, for example predicting future occurrences
- ii. Narratives in the first person give an account of the prophet's testimony. They spoke of their experiences with God, and responses to the call of God. They tell us about prophet's impelling compulsion to speak God's word. The narratives are written in the first person. They have a format 'The Lord said to me... The year that King Uzziah died, I was the Lord...'
- iii. Narratives in the third 3rd person have messages written by a third party, i.e. not the prophet but another person. For example, "Isaiah said to them, "Thus you shall say to your master, thus says the Lord: "Do not be afraid of the words." (Isaiah 37:6). The message recounts the prophets' personal life, and political background.

LESSON THREE: PROPHECIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, NEW TESTAMENT AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

Introduction

The Israelites and the African traditional societies as well as other world communities had prophets who foretold the future. Among the Israelites, there were prophets chosen by God and false prophets who told messages which communities wanted to hear. Among the African traditional communities, there were wise men and women who prophesied about the future.

In this lesson, we shall compare these prophecies and learn what was similar and different about these them. The Old Testament prophecies are compared with those from the African traditional society and the New Testament

Learning outcomes. After studying this lesson, you should be able to:

- a. State relationships between Prophecies in the Old Testament New Testament and the African Traditional Society
- b. Discuss the similarities between prophets in the African traditional society and the Old Testament
- c. Identify differences between prophets in the African traditional society and the Old Testament

a. Relationships between Prophecies

Several Old Testament (O.T.) prophecies were and are fulfilled in both the old and New Testament (N.T) in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. The Law of Moses is used in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. However Jesus gave the law a deeper meaning.

The teachings and prophecies of the prophets provided the foundation for the message in the New Testament. The prophecies of Prophet Nathan to King David that God would raise up an offspring from the lineage of David was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the expected messiah.

Jesus disciples in the New Testament referred a lot to messages in the Old Testament. The teachings of Jesus in the New Testament are based in the Old Testament prophecies. They are therefore similar to each other because New Testament is a continuation of the Old Testament.

The New Testament is the new covenant spoken of by Prophet Jeremiah and other Prophets like Isaiah, Micah, and Nathan. Their prophecies about Messiah are fulfilled in the New Testament.

b. Similarities between prophets in the African traditional society and the Old Testament. In both traditions, prophets:

- Were endowed with divine powers and they dealt with religious matters.
- Acted as intermediaries between God and people

- Warned people of impending dangers and disasters due to disobedience
- Had supernatural experiences
- Encouraged morality and discouraged evil ways
- In some cases, could heal
- Withstood oppression and opposition by the political rulers
- Encouraged people to fight injustices in society
- Foretold future disasters such as drought and wars. They explained why they were going to occur.
- Were consulted when things were not well in the society.
- Received revelations through dreams, visions and thoughts
- Were gender sensitive male prophets and female prophetesses.

c. Differences (O.T.) between prophets in the African traditional society and the Old Testament.

The Old Testament prophets had a personal relationship with God. They communicated God's messages to Israelites.

The prophets in the African traditional society communicated and received messages from the ancestor spirits

Old Testament prophets were God's mouthpieces. They began their prophesy with 'thus saith the lord'.... While the prophets in the African traditional society predicted what would happen to individuals, and communities.

The authority of prophets in the Old Testament came from God while the authority of prophets in the African traditional society came from their ancestors' spirits.

In the Old Testament prophets were called directly by God while in some African traditional communities the prophetic office was hereditary. The African traditional prophets dealt with family and local community issues while Old Testament prophets dealt with national issues, and crises. African traditional prophets were diviners while Old Testament prophets consulted God.

d. Relevance of Old Testament prophets to Christians today

Christian should be ready to be messengers of God. The call to be a Christian has a prophetic role. Some Christians are called to the office of a prophet and should prophecy for the glory of God and for the common good of the people. As God's spokes person one should always stand for the truth. Christian should proclaim God's will even if the message is not pleasant to the people.

Once appointed as a prophet, one should pass the messages to who ever they are sent to without fear or favour. God's messengers should always condemn the social political economic evils in the society.

As God's messengers Christians should live exemplary lives. They should stand for what they preach and should expect persecutions because of their works as God's messengers. They should be ready to suffer for the sake of the gospel.

Christians should pray to God to give them guidance, wisdom, and inspiration to be able to handle hardships in their lives. They should provide hope for the people in times of suffering.

Christians should realize that God calls both men and women to His service. They should be ready to obey Gods' prophetic call and not run away e.g. Jonah. They should be concerned and take care of the welfare of the poor community members.

Revision questions

1. Define the terms prophet and prophecy
2. List five categories of true prophets
3. State the difference between true and false prophets
4. In what ways were God's prophets called?
5. Outline the similarities and differences between the old testament prophets and the traditional African ones.
6. What is the relevance of prophets to Christians today?

TOPIC FOUR: PROPHET AMOS

Introduction

Amos is one of the prophets God sent to Israel to warn the people because of their evil life.

Politically, the Nation of Israel had become rich. There grew classer, the rich and the poor. The rich started oppressing the poor.

Socially, there was still the rich – poor gap. The rich exploited the poor. Merchants sold bad food, expensive and used false measurer.

Religiously, the Israelites had turned away from God and were worshipping false gods. Syncretism was practiced. Priests were paid and God's prophets were rejected.

It is in this situation that Amos was called.

He is called through visions.

Amos is one of the canonical or writing prophets. The book of Amos is a temptation of oracles spoken by the prophet on different occasions. Note that after the death of King Solomon, the kingdom of Israel was split into two and ruled by Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The northern Kingdom; called Judah was ruled by Rehoboam and was inhabited by two tribes. The southern kingdom called Israel was ruled by Jeroboam and was inhabited by 10 tribes. Amos came from Judah and prophesied in Israel.

Topic Learning Outcomes. By the end of this topic, you should be able to:

- a) Analyse Prophet Amos work in Israel
- b) Describe the call of Amos
- c) Explain the teaching of Amos
- d) Relate relevance of Amos teaching to Christianity today

LESSON ONE: Prophet Amos work in Israel

Read Amos 1:1

Learning outcomes. After reading this lesson, you should:

1. Describe the call of Amos
 2. Describe the socio, political and economic situation in Israel during the time of Prophet Amos
 3. Explain religious situation in Israel
1. The call of Amos (AMOS 1:1,3:8,7:10 – 15)

Prophet Amos was born in a village called Tekoa in Judah, the southern kingdom. Before his call, Amos was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees. He was not a professional prophet. But God called him to be a prophet. He received his call in form of a vision around 758 BC. Amos responded to God's call with obedience. He felt a deep compulsion to prophesy (Amos 3:8). God directed him to give his message to the people of Israel, the northern kingdom (Amos 7:15). He was asked to speak the will of Yahweh. He was also to fore tell punishment if Israelites did not repent their sins. His message was opposed, and challenged by Amaziah the priest of Bethel.

3. Religion. Israelites worshipped Yahweh and other gods. Idolatry was also present. This form of worship is called Syncretism . There was religious hypocrisy. Like today, there was an emphasis on external observances of religious practices and less concern for internal observances. The priests were paid for religious work. Those who couldn't pay did not have religious ceremonies. They were offered at the expense of the poor. The prophets of God were rejected.

4. Social – economic – political situation. When Amos prophesied, King Jeroboam ruled Israel, the northern kingdom while King Uzziah ruled Judah. Amos was sent to prophesy to the people of Israel in the northern kingdom. He concentrated his work mainly in Bethel and Samaria – the capital city of Israel and the main centres of worship.

When Amos started his prophesy, there was peace and prosper in Israel and Judah. Both kingdoms were wealthy. However, the wealth did not reach the poor. This was because the wealth and power were in the hands of the king, his family, his officials, and wealthy merchants. As a result, Israel citizens were divided into two classes; the rich and the poor.

Unfortunately, the rich people owned big luxurious houses. They drunk wine, and used the most expensive perfumes. They acquired their wealth at the expense of the poor. They oppressed and exploited the poor. The merchants of trade for example, were dishonest in their trade businesses. They sold bad wheat to unsuspecting customers and overcharged customers by measuring with false scales. Because of the inflated prices, the poor borrowed money from the rich at high interest rates to buy basic things like food. Hence, there was massive bribery and corruption in society and law courts.

As a result the poor lacked basic necessities or needs like food, shelter, and clothing. It was at this time when God sent Amos to give prophesy to Israel.

SAQ. How did the rich oppress the poor in Israel?

LESSON TWO: VISIONS OF AMOS

Read AMOS 7: 1 – 9, 8:1 – 3. 9:1 – 4)

Vision is a picture we have in our mind. It is a future to come. Amos was shown many visions by God.

Lesson outcomes. After reading these verses in Amos you should be able to: -

1. Analyse all the visions and
2. State the message of each vision

3. Summaries things that God condemned through Amos

1. The vision of the locusts (Amos 7:1 – 3)

Amos saw a swarm of locusts being sent by God to destroy all plants and food crops in the land. The locusts were, a sign of disaster, which God was going to send to Israel as a punishment for their disobedience. Amos cried to God to forgive the people. God heard and changed his mind.

2. The vision of a great fire (Amos 7:4 – 6)

Amos saw a vision of a supernatural fire that burnt up the land. He asked God to forgive the people and God listened. The punishment was stopped.

3. The vision of a crooked wall/ the plumb line (Amos 7:7 – 9)

Amos saw the Lord standing beside the wall checked it with a plumb line. The wall represented the Israelites. They stopped observing the laws of their covenant with God. God found Israelites disobeying the covenant. God promised to destroy holy places of Israel..

4. The vision of a basket of ripe fruits (Amos 8:1 – 3)

In this vision, Amos saw a basket of ripe fruits. Fruits are harvested at the end of the summer. This meant that Israel was ripe for punishment for her refusal to turn to God. Amos did not pray for forgiveness. God would no longer withhold His judgment. Time for repentance was over.

5. The vision of the destruction of the altar. Read Amos 9:1 – 4.

Amos saw the Lord standing by the altar. The Lord ordered the destruction of the temple. The shrines of Dan and Bethel were destroyed because they were the centres of idolatry. No one would escape punishment no matter where they hide.

Summary of issues that God pointed out to Israel through Prophet Amos

a. Lack of social justice

There was lack of social justice and responsibility by the king of Israel. Social justice means dealing with other people fairly. It implies showing concern for the needs of others.

b. Lack of responsibility. This refers to the rulers and people of Israel being accountable for their actions. In modern life, it is doing one's duty and fulfilling one's obligation to God and others.

c. Practice of hypocritical religion in Israel. The Israelites were insincere in their worship. They made empty sacrifices. They worshipped idols as well as God. They profaned the name of God (Yahweh). They made idols of Baal and offered sacrifices to them. They worshipped other gods. This is syncretism and God does not allow worship of any other God but himself.

d. God's judgment against Israel and other nations. God promised to destroy Israel and leave a remnant of them for restoration.

e. Oppressions of the poor by the rich

God condemned King Jeroboam's rule of Israel because of the oppression of the poor, government corruption and bribery of king's officials. These officials sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals (shoes) i.e. it's like practising slavery. The rich trampled on the poor, despised them and placed no value on the poor. The poor gave their garments as security for loan. This was contrary to God's commandments. The garment was supposed to be returned back to the owner before sunset. The Samaritan women were 'fat like the well fed cows of Bashan' led luxurious lives and were very unkind to the poor. The rich took an excessive share of the harvest from the farmers. Rulers loved luxury and were arrogant. They loved material things and showed pride in material possessions. They used expensive perfumes.

f. Corruption and bribery. The judges were corrupt. They accepted bribes. There was a conspiracy between the rich and the judges against the poor

g. Pride in material possessions

The capital city of Israel was Samaria. It was built on a mountain called Bethel, which was also a place of worship. There was prosperity in the land. The Israelites prided themselves in their riches and material possessions. Amos told them God would destroy their wealth.

h. Dishonesty. This is telling lies, cheating or using unjust means to get certain things. The wealthy merchants waited impatiently for the end of the holy days so that they could engage in lucrative businesses. They cheated the poor by using false scales. They sold bad wheat to the poor. They mixed good and bad grains and sold them to unsuspecting people.

i. Sexual immorality

Sexual immorality was prevalent or common in Israel. For example a father and son would have sex with the same girl. There was temple (cultic) prostitution. There was dishonesty; sexual immorality. This sexual behaviour made the temple unholy.

j. Drunkenness

They Israelites spent time drinking when the poor lacked the basic needs. They engaged in excessive drinking of wine. They even forced the Nazirites to drink wine. They accepted drunkenness.

k. Profaning the name of the God

Israelites did not respect the name of God. They committed sin. They forced Nazirites to drink wine; forcing it down their throats yet they knew that Nazirites were people set aside and chosen by God to serve God. This act showed contempt of God's commands. Nazirites were not supposed to drink wine or cut their hair. Israelites did this to show their contempt of the Lord,

l. Hypocritical Religion and Idolatry in Israel

Hypocrisy is pretending to be something different from the person one is. It is also saying one thing, and doing another thing. For example, Israelites did a lot of religious rites according to the laws of Moses and yet majority of them were unjust, corrupt and oppressed the poor. They observed the external religious activities while their hearts were corrupt and insincere. Amos condemned Israelites for this hypocrisy, characterized by insincere worship, and mixture of religious beliefs leading to diverse practices of religion i.e. syncretism. This is a combination or mixture of Israelites' monotheism (Yahwehism) and worship of idols and other gods especially Baal, the gods of their neighbours.

m. Empty sacrifices

The Israelites made elaborative offerings and sacrifices. Yet God was interested only in sincere worship and free will offerings and not mere sacrifices, and tithes. ‘Take away from me the noise of your songs’ (Amos 5:21 – 23).

LESSON THREE. GOD’S JUDGMENT AGAINST ISRAEL AND OTHER NATIONS

Read Amos chapter 1 and 2

Learning outcomes. After studying this lesson, you should be able to:

- a. State the sins committed by Israel and other nations
- b. Identify how God punished Israel and other nations

i) Israel. She committed several crimes, which were condemned by Prophet Amos. Read lesson two again before you go on and list down crimes that were pointed out by Amos. Okay, you have seen that Israel committed crimes of injustice, disobedience to God, breaking their covenant with God, idolatry, hypocrisy among other sins mentioned above. Israel was punished for these crimes.

Punishments were severe. Israelites would be exiled forcibly and painfully. Earthquakes, famines, fires, oppression from foreign kings, epidemics and divine silence, would destroy their kingdom and holy places.

ii) Syria. Its capital was Damascus. Syria committed war crimes. The soldiers were excessively cruel in times of war. They murdered their prisoners brutally. For this cruelty, their punishment was to be severe. Their palaces would be destroyed by fire and the people would be exiled in Kir.

iii) Gaza and philistines. Their crime was capturing other people and selling them into slavery. For this sin, God’s punishment was destruction of their city by divine fire. It would burn down the wall of Gaza city and destroy it. God would have no more association with them.

iv) Tyre. Their Crime was violation of a treaty of friendship they had made. They broke it by capturing a “whole nation into exile in the land of Edom”. The punishment was ...God would send fire to destroy city of Tyre and its fortress (Amos 1:9-10).

v. Edom. Her people were descendants of Esau. Yet Edom was ruthless to the Israelite to whom they were closely related. For this crime of ruthlessness, the punishment was ... God would destroy them by fire

vi) Ammon committed crime of brutal killings. The people of Ammon attacked and killed their neighbours. They “ripped open pregnant woman in Gilead” (vs. 13). God’s punishment was destruction of the fortress and wall of the city of Rabbah by fire. “Their king and his officers will go into exile: (vs. 15).

vii) Moab. The people of Moab; their crime was mishandling the body of the king of Edom. They burned his bones to ashes. God’s punishment was destruction of the city of Kerioth by divine fire. The people, their rulers and leaders would be killed in battle.

viii) Judah. Their crimes were (1) failure to obey God’s commands and (2) despising god’s teaching.

ix) Samaria, Egypt and Ashdod. Their crime was dishonesty and “filling their mansions with things taken by crime and violence” (Amos 3:10). Women of Samaria committed the crime of drunkenness, oppressing the weak and poor. The punishment for all these countries is destruction of their land, mansions and army. But a remnant will not go to captivity, and shall not be destroyed. Amos said the remnants are like ... 2 legs, or a piece of an ear of a sheep rescued from the mouth of a lion (Amos 3:12)

x) Amaziah the priest of Bethel. He strongly opposed Amos and told him to go back and prophesy in Judah. Amos told Amaziah God sent him to Israel. His punishment for opposing God’s messenger was.. Amaziah’s wife would be a harlot, his children will die in the war, his land will be given to others, and Amaziah will die in a foreign land (Amos 7: 14-17).

Lessons to learn from God’s judgment of Israel and other nations

The Assyrians attacked Israel, occupied their land and exiled others. God is (a) universal, (b) God hates sin (c) God is concerned about the welfare of his people

(d) God is merciful and spares a remnant

xi. Israel’s election (Amos 2:9 – 11, 3:1 – 2, 9:7

Election: is an act of choosing a person or group of people for a purpose or action. Israel’s election refers to God’s choice of the Israelites out of the entire human kind to be his people. God chose them to serve

him, be a Holy nation and to be the light of the world. God made a covenant with the Israelites. In the covenant they agreed to live a holy life. In return, God looked after them. He led them out of Egypt to the wilderness and finally to Canaan. God chose His prophets from the Israelites and raised Nazirites.

Despite God's favour, the Israelites rebelled and sinned against God. And although Israelites were reminded that God cared for other nations equally and are to be punished if they disobeyed God; and that they were neither superior, nor better than other nations, they disobeyed God several times.

xii. The day of the lord Amos taught that the day of the lord would be a day of severe judgment for sins. It is not a time of happiness, joy or victory. It is a day of darkness, terror, disaster, gloom, wailing, flooding, mourning, defeat, punishment, famine for food and God's word.

xiii. The Remnant and Restoration. Remnant means a small number of survivors. These are the Israelites who will remain after the entire nation is punished. They are also those who returned to Jerusalem after the exile.

Restoration is an act of reinstating things / persons to their former state or position. Amos informed the Israelites that God was still looking after them, and waiting for their repentance. The nation of Israel would not be destroyed completely. God would preserve the few righteous ones. He would raise the fallen dynasty of David. People would be restored back to their land to rebuild their cities. There was to be a great harvest and grapes shall overflow.

xiv. Duty of Christians. Christians are the selected people of God. As the chosen ones, they should one, live holy lives and two, use their position to serve God and others. Three, Christians have a moral responsibility to spread God's word, four, care for the needy and five, be the light of the world.

xv. The Day of the lord. Read Amos 5:18-20, 6:3-5, 8:7-13. In the Old Testament, the day of the Lord is the day that Yahweh would make Israel victorious against other nations. On this day the Israelite believed that God would establish his rule over and with Israel. The day of the Lord was also believed to be the day when Israel would be prosperous, would have favour with God, and the just would triumph over the wicked.

In the New Testament, the day of the lord is also the Day of Judgment (Parousia). It is the day of the second coming of Christ. On that day, everyone will be judged. Christians believe that it is the day that Christ will come for His bride (the church). Those who had obeyed the laws of God shall be received by Christ and given the reward of the eternal life. On that day, God's kingdom shall be established and Christ will reign forever.

xvi. Relevance of Amos teachings to Christians today. The messages of the prophecy of Amos are relevant to Christians today. This is because God is universal. He chose Israel but still punished her for her disobedience, and sins just as He punished other nations like Syria and Gaza.

The message that God hates hypocrisy is very clear. Thus Christians should be truthful and practice what they preach. They must worship God in sincerity. Other messages are:

Justice. Christians should be just / fair in dealing with others.

Self – Indulgence. Christians should not pursue luxury and self-indulgence when others lack the basic needs.

Bribery. Christians should condemn bribery and corruption, and uphold justice.

Punishment. Christians should bear in mind that God will punish every evil.

Wealth. When Israel became wealthy, they departed from the covenant with God. Christians should share their wealth with the needy and acquire their wealth justly

Hypocritical religion. Amos taught about hypocrisy in religion. This was for example offering empty sacrifices. Christians have to learn to be sincere, to be concerned about their internal well being and soul more than outward observances of religion.

Drunkenness. Christians should not engage in activities that can divert their faith from God. If that happens, they should learn to be Repentant.

Revision exercise

1. List the visions that Amos saw
2. Explain the evils that Amos condemned in his teachings
3. Give reasons why prophet Amos condemned idol worship in Israel
4. List evils in the society today that Amos would condemn

TOPIC FIVE. PROPHET JEREMIAH

Introduction.

Israel had not taken heed to Amos' prophecies. This was especially on idolatry. So, God sent another prophet to continue with the same work. Jeremiah was therefore appointed as a prophet.

Jeremiah is one of the Old Testament Major Prophets. He was called to a prophet at around 627 B.C. He was called as a young man, probably 20 years old. He prophesied in the southern kingdom- Judah, for a period of 40 years. His prophetic ministry took place before and during the exile of Judah.

Learning Outcomes. By the end of this topic, you should be able to: -

- a Describe the political, Social, and religious background of prophet Jeremiah.
- b Describe the personal life and call of Jeremiah.
- c Explain the evils condemned by Jeremiah.
- d Explain the contents of the temple sermon.
- e Highlight the relevance of Jeremiah's teaching on evils, false prophets and Christians today.

LESSON ONE: THE CALL JEREMIAH

Learning outcomes. After reading this lesson, you should be able to: -

- i. Describe the situation of the people of Judah
- ii. Identify religious, political and socio classes of Judah
- iii. Describe the call of Jeremiah
- iv. Explain lessons that modern Christians can learn from the call of Jeremiah

a. The Kingdom of Judah

Social background

The people of Judah were divided into three social classes. At the top were the (i) Aristocrats. These were the ruling class, which consisted of the king, his family, royal officials, princesses, priests, and professional prophets. This class of the rich oppressed the poor.

Below them was the class (ii) of technical professional such as stonecutters, carpenters, builders, masons, blacksmiths, masons, and others craftsmen (2 Kings 12:12). Below them was class (iii) made up of poor people such as slaves, widows, orphans, and foreigners. All these poor people were mistreated.

In terms of ethics, there was moral degradation. They committed adultery, prostitution, murder, false witness, and corruption.

Religions background.

The Kings and people of Judah worshipped idols. They practiced human sacrifice, divination and magic, and listened to false prophecies. They abandoned their covenant with God and their way of life and practiced syncretism, which is worshipping God and other false gods like Baal.

King Josiah tried to restore true worship by carrying out several reforms. Prophetess Huldah prophesied that Judah would be punished after Josiah's death since he humbled before Yahweh.

Political Background.

Prophet Jeremiah lived in the 7th century BC and prophesied when Judah was ruled by King Josiah, and later his sons Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah; and king Jehoiachin. Judah was conquered and ruled by Assyrians who were conquered by Egyptians who ruled Judah up to 605 BC. Egyptians; were conquered by Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar. This was according to the prophecies of Jeremiah.

b. The Call of Jeremiah. Read Jer 1: 19.

Jeremiah's father was a priest called Hilkiyah. He was born in the territory of Benjamin; at a place called Anathoth, He was well educated.

Jeremiah was called to be a prophet in 627 B.C during the reign of King Josiah. He received his call in form of a dialogue with Yahweh. God told him that he had appointed him to be his messenger; even before he was formed in his mother's womb, God had selected him to be a prophet. Jeremiah said he was too young and did not know how to speak. Jeremiah was forewarned of the hostility he would encounter in his prophetic career. God told him that He would protect him and not to fear.

God touched Jeremiah's mouth. This symbolized that God is the one who shall put words in his mouth. Jeremiah responded to God's call in faith and obedience. He was given a message that God was going to bring judgment upon the Kingdom of Judah. God promised to make him a fortified city, an iron pillar and bronze wall for protection. He was commanded by God not to marry, neither have children and not to attend social gatherings, weddings, and funerals. His mission made him isolated and lonely.

As a result, his own family and relatives rejected him and plotted to kill him. But he had few friends like Ebed-melech, Ahikam who helped him to get out of a pit.

Jeremiah was persecuted by the kings of Judah. Priests including priest Pashhur opposed him, and false prophets like Haniah. He prophesied that God shall punish wicked Kings, priests, and ordinary people. He suffered spiritually and emotionally.

At the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C, the army officers of Nebuchadnezzar released him from prison. He went to Egypt where he died at an old age and as a faithful servant of God. His life was symbolic to the people of Judah. During his call, Jeremiah saw two visions.

Vision one was the vision of a “branch of an almond tree”.

The tree seemed dead, bare, yet life was in it. This vision was telling Judah that although God seemed to be ‘sleeping’, He was watching over them if they obey Him.

Vision two was “a pot boiling in the north, and it is about to tip over this way” (1:13). The boiling pot tilted away from the north signified that the destroyers of Judah would come from the north. The pot was ready to boil over and spill its contents. This meant that Judah was soon going to have trouble. Babylon would pour horrifying disasters on Judah.

Lessons from the call of Jeremiah

God has a purpose for each person and He can call anybody to do His work. He calls the unborn, the young, old, rich, and poor. God prepares people for His work, through specific experiences at family level, in school, and church.

A person who is called to serve God should be ready to meet opposition. God protects His servants and promises to be with them. Jeremiah felt inadequate to speak. Christians should not let their human weakness hinder them from performing their tasks. Christians should respond to God’s call in obedience.

LESSON TWO. EVILS ADDRESSED BY JEREMIAH. Read Jeremiah 2, 3, 4, 5,7, 9, 10, 23, and 28.

Learning outcomes. After reading this lesson,

1. Name the evil practices that Jeremiah condemned
2. Explain why Jeremiah condemned these evil practices

There were many evils in Judah and Israel. We have mentioned some of them. These were: necromancy, dishonesty, deception, false prophecy, human sacrifice, and idolatry

i. Necromancy. Words related to necromancy are divinations, magic, sorcery, and playing tricks on people's minds. Necromancy is the art of seeking hidden knowledge from the mysterious world of spirits: using magic, and divination, which is invoking the dead. Divination was condemned in the Hebrew language. Diviners, magicians, sooth sayers and fortunetellers used necromancy. Prophet Jeremiah condemned necromancy.

Reasons why Jeremiah condemned necromancy

Necromancy was a deception and therefore an evil practice. The diviners gave false information from their own imagination. This practice polluted the true worship of Yahweh and indicated Israelites lack of faith in the one true God. Two, by trusting in divination, and magic, the Israelites showed their lack of knowledge of the one true God. Three, by consulting the mediums, the Israelites disobeyed God (Jer 27:8-10).

ii) Deception and Dishonesty

Dishonesty is lack of moral integrity or moral uprightness. Deception is cheating, and telling lies intentionally. It is also giving false and misleading information.

The Israelites were dishonest because they worshiped God and at the same time committed social injustices against their brothers and sisters. Their repentance was insincere. There was treachery, and greed. They laid traps for each other. People pretended to be friendly and at the same time conspired to kill. Jeremiah challenged the Israelites people to 'circumcise their hearts which were deceitful. Their tongues were 'deadly arrows' and they listened to false prophecies like that of Hannaniah

Jeremiah condemned deception. This was because it led to syncretism, and hypocrisy in worship; and breaking down of the covenant way of life. Jeremiah warned the Israelites and asked them to repent

iii. False prophesy by Hannaniah. Jer 28

During the reign of king Zedekiah, Hannaniah broke the yoke that Jeremiah was wearing. Hannaniah spoke in the name of Yahweh. He lied to the people as he spoke from his imagination and dreams. Jeremiah denounced Hannaniah. He predicted and prophesied the death of Hannaniah in the same year.

And it came to pass. Jeremiah had also prophesied that the captivity of Judah should be long contrary to Hannaniah who said Judah will be exiled for 2 years.

Reasons for condemning false prophets

Prophets of Baal were still in existence. False prophets like Hannaniah had filled the people of Israel with unrealistic hopes of peace yet Judah was to be destroyed. Recall the characteristics of true and false prophets. False prophets did not condemn sin. They prophesied for money and in the process misled people away from Yahweh. False prophets prophesied from their dreams, imaginations and not from God. They gave people false hopes. They intended to make themselves popular, with the King and the people.

iv) Human sacrifice. The people offered human sacrifice to idols and oppressed each other. Human sacrifice is the act of killing human beings for a religious or spiritual purpose. The Israelites copied this activity from the Canaanites. Children were believed to be the best sacrifice since people believed they would get great favors from the deities. Some kings such as Ahaz and Manasseh sacrificed their sons to idols. Jeremiah condemned human sacrifice.

Reasons for condemning human sacrifice

Human sacrifice was an act of idolatry. It indicated infidelity of the Israelites to the one true God. It demonstrated Israel's disrespect for the sacred gift of life. It showed their lack of knowledge of the true nature of Yahweh. Human sacrifice defiled the land for life is in the blood. Blood speaks hence the land was crying at this vengeance. God did not ask for human sacrifices. Human sacrifice was a sign of lack of love of God and love for one another. It is a demonstration of disregard for human life. Only God has the right to take away life. In our country people kill each other every day especially on the road. Why do we do this?

v. Idolatry

Idolatry is the worship of many gods. Idols are images made by people for worship. The Israelites practiced syncretism, which we said was the worship of Yahweh and idols. The people of Israel were worshipping Baal the Queen of heaven, sun, moon, stars, and also Yahweh (Jer 8:2).

Idols were placed even in Yahweh's sacred places. The temple was defiled by idols. This the temple unclean. Jeremiah condemned it. He told the people of Israel that "{they have forsaken the fountain of living waters (GOD) and hewn out for themselves broken cisterns (IDOLS) that can hold no water" (Jer 2: 11-13).

Why did Jeremiah condemn idolatry? Read Jer 2: 20, 2:1-3, 5: 7-8.

Idolatry is like adultery and prostitution. It defiled people and was a sign of lack of faith in Yahweh. It defiled the land. Idolatry led to divine judgment and punishment.

People of Judah abandoned Yahweh the 'Husband' and chased "lovers" the idols and deities. The Israelites (Northern kingdom) had been punished before and yet Judah did not learn from them. By worshipping idols Judah broke the covenant and their relationship with God. And unless the people of Judah repented, they would be punished; as there is only one true living God to be worshipped and obeyed. Is there idolatry among Christians today's

vi. Other evils condemned by Jeremiah

People of Judah trusted that the temple was secure, holy and cannot be destroyed. Jeremiah denounced this false belief about the temple. He warned them that God would destroy the temple because of the many evils committed in it. The temple of God had become a 'den of robbers' and human sacrifices.

People of Judah committed other evils such as hypocrisy (Jer 7; 9-10); social injustice (adultery, murder), stubbornness, and rebellion.

vi. The temple

Temple is a place of worship. The temple of Israelites was in Jerusalem. It signified the presence of God among his people. The Israelites believed God could never destroy or allow destruction of the temple. Jeremiah stood at the gates of the temple court during Jehoiakim's reign, and Judah that God would destroy the temple and send them to exile. He urged them to repent and turn back to God. King Josiah heard the message of Jeremiah and he reformed religious practices in Judah.

vii. Religions reforms carried out by King Josiah

This topic is not clearly spelt out in the syllabus. It is based on the book of Deuteronomy. The scroll was discovered in the temple during repairs.

Josiah ordered the repair of the temple of God. He led a national ceremony to review the covenant. He destroyed idols and altars associated with the worship of foreign deities throughout Judah. He eliminated all the priests associated with the worship of false deities. He celebrated Passover in Jerusalem. The successors of King Josiah did not follow his example. They became corrupt. They persecuted the prophets of God. They listened to false prophets. They promoted idolatry and child sacrifice.

viii. The Relevance of Jeremiah's teachings to Christians today.

Christians should denounce hypocrisy in the society today. They should not result to witchcraft, divination and sorcery. They should be upright, and worship God in sincerity. They are to proclaim divine judgment upon those who refuse to obey God's will, just like Jeremiah declared God's judgment upon Judah due to the sins of the people.

Like Jeremiah, Christians should speak out against modern idols like love of money, power, obsession with sports, sex, and drugs among other evils. Christians should condemn destruction of human life, violence; murder, abortion, parents killing their own children, genocide and exploitation of the poor.

Christians should be aware of the existence of false teachings and prophecies. They should pray for God's guidance and wisdom to be able to distinguish truth from false teaching. Christians have a responsibility to correct one another and call on sinners to repent.

Christians are to be trustworthy, upright, and merciful to the poor and condemn dishonesty. They should practice justice in their relationship with others; preach against disobedience, stubbornness and pray to God to help them overcome these vices.

Read these review questions and answer before reading answers>

1. Why was Jeremiah reluctant to accept the call?
2. Which evils / sins did Jeremiah Condemn?.
3. Give examples of idol worship in Kenya.
4. Describe Jeremiah's temple sermon

SAQ answer.

1. Jeremiah felt inadequate because he was too young to work for God. He argued that he did not know how to speak. He was afraid. He knew he would face stiff opposition from the people of Judah. The message of God's judgments is difficult to deliver.
2. Read text again and look for evils and sins that Jeremiah condemned.
3. Examples of idol worship in Kenya are many. Some people including Christians practice witchcraft, sorcery, personality cults and hero worship of religions and political leaders. Other people, worship money, materialism, media, and sports obsession with power / status Sexual immorality – devil worship

4. Jeremiah's temple sermon. Read text again.

LESSON THREE. JEREMIAH'S TEACHINGS ON JUDGMENT AND PUNISHMENT

Read Jeremiah 5:12-18, 6:1-30, 7:30, 8:1-17, 10: 17-25, 15:1-9, 17:1-13, 25: 1-38

Learning Outcomes. By the end of this topic, you should be able to: -

a Summarize in two paragraphs Jeremiah key teachings.

b Explain the significance of symbolic acts related to judgement and punishment.

c Describe suffering and lamentations of Jeremiah

d Explain the teachings of Jeremiah on the new covenant.

a. Jeremiah teachings. Sin was internalised in the hearts of the people of Judah. God punished them. God punishes people because of their unfaithfulness. Punishment is a penalty, for an offence or a crime committed.

But in punishing people, God is a just judge. He does not punish people without a reason irrespective of their status.

God judges people by looking into their hearts. Divine judgment is for a group. For example, the people of Judah were punished as a group. However God searches each person's heart and judges accordingly. God executes His judgment by means of political and historical events. Divine punishments are in forms of natural disasters like drought, famine, and epidemics. God's punishment is unavoidable, and inescapable. Judah took the best option by surrendering to the Babylonians.

The purpose for God's judgement is to correct the sinner. God gave his people a chance to repent before he punished them. God's judgment is universal. It is not limited to one nation. God punished the neighbours of Judah who at that time were Egypt, Moab, Ammon, and Babylon. God's punishment is severe compared to that of venomous snakes that bite the people of Judah. God's judgement is not necessarily a punishment from God for one's sins. It is symbolic. The sufferings of Jeremiah were symbolic of the life of the people of Judah.

What can we learn about God's punishments? Are modern disasters such as cyclones, floods, earthquakes, landslides, epidemics, bomb blasts, civil wars, forest fires, rebellions in schools a sign of God's judgment and punishment? What do you think?

b. Symbolic acts related to judgement and punishment

People use several methods to convey messages to each other. We use songs, advertisements, dramas, and stories by the fireside, in novels, the Internet, and magazines to communicate messages about children, adults, society, political leaders, poverty and many others. The prophets used: (1). Oracles; 'Thus says the Lord'; (2) Allegories (3) Parables (4) Songs (5) Symbolic Visions (6) Symbolic actions and (7) dramatized messages

Symbolic acts of Jeremiah

- i The linen waist cloth (Jer.13)
- ii Jeremiah's personal life (Jer.16)
- iii Jeremiah's visit to a potter (Jer.18)
- iv The broken earthen flask (Jer.19)
- v The symbolic vision of 2 baskets of figs (Jer.24)
- vi The wearing of the yoke

i. The Linen Waist Cloth. Read Jer.13

Jeremiah was instructed by God to buy a linen waistcloth and wear it around his waist without dipping it in water. He was told to hide the cloth in a hole near river Euphrates. Afterwards he was told to take the cloth. He found it spoilt for wearing.

Significance. The linen material was for priestly garments in Israel. It symbolized Israel's holiness. The unwashed cloth represented Judah's sinful pride. Israel used to cling close to God but now Israel / Judah were spoilt, rebellious, arrogant and pursued foreign gods. God was going to destroy them if they did not repent. The spoilt linen waistcloth was a symbol for future God's action.

ii. Jeremiah's personal Life. Read Jer 16. His life was a symbolic act. He was told not to marry, have children, and nor attend funerals, social gatherings, feasts and wedding parties.

Significance. The personal life of Jeremiah was one of suffering. This signified the suffering that the people of Judah would be subjected to. Judah was punished because of their wickedness and rebellion.

Jeremiah's loneliness signified the perishing of families through the sword, famine and disease. It would be a time of terror for the families of Judah. Their normal social life of feasting, merry making would

come to an end. There would be no weddings and no one to bury the dead. Hence Jeremiah was forbidden from mourning for the dead.

iii. Jeremiah's at the potter's house (Jer.18)

Jeremiah was told to go to a potter's house. He found the potter making a clay vessel. "Whenever a piece of pottery turned out imperfect, he would take the clay and make it into something else (18: 4). The potter made a better pot, more perfect vessel than the spoilt one.

Significance. God is the potter. People of Judah are the clay. As the potter destroyed to vessel, God intended to destroy Judah because of their wickedness and mould those who repented into better people. God was going to shape them into faithful people. God's judgement was to be a corrective punishment.

iv. The broken clay Jar. Read Jer.19. God told Jeremiah to buy a clay flask

He then took some elders and priests to the valley of Valley of Hinnon. He delivered a sermon condemning the people of Judah for their idolatry and other evils. Jeremiah then broke the clay jar in their presence and announced to them that Yahweh would destroy Jerusalem and Judah as Jeremiah had destroyed the jar.

Significance. The kings, priests and prophets of Judah would be shattered like the clay flask because of their sins. Sine, they brutally sacrificed their children; they are to suffer horrifying experiences at the hand of their enemies. They shall suffer starvation and turn into cannibals; eating their own children and neighbours (v.9).

Broken pieces of a clay pot cannot be moulded. No one was to escape judgment. However there is hope after punishment.

v. Two Baskets of Figs (Jer.24). Jeremiah received the visions, after the deportation and exile of leading citizens of Judah and Israel to Babylon. Two baskets of figs were placed in front of the temple. One basket had very good figs, which had ripened. The other basket had bad figs unfit for human consumption.

Significance. The basket of good figs signified the first exile. God would renew their hearts; use them to fulfil his promises to the Israelites. He would recreate them to a new people. The basket of the bad figs represented people living in Jerusalem and Egypt. Since they were not exiled they had a self-righteous attitude. They thought that God spared them because they were truthful but it was not so. They shall also be destroyed through famine, and diseases. This vision signifies hope and restoration of the Israelites.

vi. Jeremiah Wears an Ox Yoke. Read Jer. 27. When Zedekiah son of Josiah became the ruler of Judah, Jeremiah was instructed by God “to make” for himself “a yoke out of leather straps and wooden crossbars” and to wear it around his neck (27: 2). Jeremiah moved around in the yoke for quite sometime in public.

He was also given a message for ambassadors of kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon, who were coming to see King Zedekiah in Jerusalem. They were to give God’s message to their kings. The message was to “submit to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia; his son, and his grandson. Any nation that accepted this message shall not suffer; but if any nation ..will no submit to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia rule, God will punish that nation by war, starvation and disease” Read Jer 27:6-8. The message for king Zedekiah was to surrender to the Babylonian rule and live, if he resists he would perish.

The message for priests and people of Judah was not to be misled by the false prophets. The temple would be destroyed. Its treasures looted by the Babylonians.

Significance. The yoke represented the Babylonians rule. Nebuchadnezzar was used by God to bring judgment to all nations. Yahweh is a universal God and his judgment is universal. Sinners are punished regardless of their origin or nation. Those who repent are spared.

Reflection questions

Why did God inspire Jeremiah to use symbolic acts to convey his message?

Answer

Israelites were stubborn. Jeremiah acts were reminders to Judah to turn to God and stop idolatry and all the sins they were committing. They had drifted too far from God. False prophets were prophesying lies to them. The people of Judah were expected to meditate on these acts and understand God’s will for them and see the seriousness of the matter. This was also to imprint a lasting impression in their minds.

SAQ. Which methods do pastors / priests use to communicate God’s message to Christians today?

c. The sufferings and lamentations of Jeremiah

Read Jer 11, 12, 17:14 – 18, 18:18- 23 , 20: 1 – 6, 27, 37, and 38.

Jeremiah sufferings were experiences that were painful; physically and emotionally. In suffering there is loss and grief. Lamentations are strong emotional expressions of pain and grief. Jeremiah suffered in the following ways

I. Rejection by his own family and relatives. They plotted to kill him. This grieved Jeremiah.

II. Anathoth planned to kill him but God protected Jeremiah. He pronounced God's judgment upon them

III. Jeremiah suffered when he was accused falsely. He was accused of blasphemy after the temple sermon. He foretold the destruction of the temple, just like Jesus Christ in the New Testament did.

IV. He was accused of treachery. That he was planning to leave Jerusalem and join the Babylonians. This led to Jeremiah being arrested and put in an underground jail.

V. Jeremiah received death threats because of speaking for God. King Jehoiakim plotted to kill prophet Uriah. The prophet escaped to Egypt but he was followed to Egypt, arrested and killed by king Jehoiakim. The king had planned to accuse Jeremiah of Uriah death. Ahikam and other elders defended Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 26)

VI. Jeremiah suffered loneliness and solitude. He felt emotional anguish and complained to God of his orders not to marry, neither attend social gathering and celebrations. This made Jeremiah lonely since he did not participate in the family life, political life, community activities and religious life.

VII. Jeremiah experienced inner personal struggle due to his love for his own people He did not want to see them suffer but the people were stubborn Read Jer. 12:1 – 6, 15:10 – 21, and 27.

VIII. Jeremiah's prophesying judgment caused him emotional pain and agony. His messages were mainly of severe judgment and punishment.

IX. He went through a spiritual struggle in his relationship with God. He felt frustrations, doubts, self-pity and despair. He wondered why God made him suffer. Why do the wicked prosper? He also wondered why God was taking too long to fulfil his prophecies. God assured him that Judah would be punished and promised to give Jeremiah victory against his enemies.

X. Jeremiah suffered physical assault, imprisonment and an attempt on his life. Pashhur, the chief temple priest ordered beating and chaining of Jeremiah to the temple gate. Jeremiah prophesied that Pashshur's name would change to 'terror everywhere'.

XI. King Zedekiah released Jeremiah from the cell to his court. Jeremiah continued to prophecy and was thrown in a muddy cistern. Here he was rescued by Ebed-melech an Ethiopian Eunuch. The court officials had accused him of not being patriotic. Jeremiah remained in jail until the Babylonians overthrew Jerusalem. He did not change his prophecies. Read Jer. 10:1 – 6, 27, 37, and 38.

Is there relevance of the sufferings and lamentations of Jeremiah to Christians today? From his suffering Christians learn to be ready to face opposition and rejection from their own family members and relatives for the sake of the gospel. Christians should be prepared to suffer persecution for the Lord. Christians should be ready to make sacrifices for the sake of God. Be ready to lead humble lives. Jeremiah's open confessions to God encourage Christians to be open to God. Christians should let God avenge for them just like Jeremiah prayed to God to revenge his enemies. Christians should not lose

hope in times of difficulty. Christians learn that tribulations strengthen their faith. Christians should learn to deal with negative emotions such as self-pity, grief and trust God. Jeremiah was told by God to repent of his negative utterances. Christians should do the same as they are assured of divine security and protection against their persecutors.

LESSON FOUR. JEREMIAH'S TEACHING ABOUT THE NEW COVENANT

A covenant is an agreement. Another word for covenant is testament. Jeremiah taught that there would be a new covenant between God and Israel. This new covenant would be different from the Old (Sinai) covenant. The new covenant would renew the broken relationship between God and his people.

Lesson outcomes. After reading Jeremiah's teaching:

- a. State the terms of the new covenant.
- b. Identify the differences between the old covenant and the new covenant
- c. Summarize the similarities between the old covenant and the new covenant

a. The New Covenant. In the new covenant, the law would be written in the hearts of the people unlike the old covenant where the law was written on stone tablets. Every individual would know God personally and not through prophets as it was during times of Jeremiah and previous one. Each person would be responsible for his/her sins. God would forgive sins and remember them no more. The new covenant would be established after God's punishment of Israel and establishing a 'new Israel', a 'new people' of God.

The new covenant would establish a new beginning. People would forget the first Exodus. The second Exodus would be deliverance and restoration from Babylon. God would initiate the new covenant as he did with the first. It would be a new covenant of peace, unity, prosperity, Joy and gladness. In the new covenant a 'righteous branch' would be established. The new covenant would be everlasting. It would not be broken again.

- b. Differences between the old covenant and the new covenant

Old Covenant New Covenant

1. Based on law Based on faith
2. Word written on stone tablets Word written in peoples hearts

3. God known personally by a few priests prophets and prophets Each to person to know God personally
4. Covenant broken when people sinned Everlasting covenant
5. Sins punished collectively Sins punished individually
6. 1st Exodus from Egypt 2nd Exodus from Babylon
7. Sealed by animal sacrifice Sealed by Jesus sacrifice (blood)

What are the similarities between the old and the new covenant? Jesus fulfilled the new covenant. Jesus is the 'righteous branch' from the lineage of David. In the last supper, before his death, Jesus said 'this cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. Read Luke, 22:20. The death and resurrection of Jesus marks the new covenant. Jesus spoke of forgiveness of sins of humanity Jesus forgave people's sins, for example, the sinful woman in Simon's house (Luke 7: 36 – 50). In the new covenant the law would be written in people's hearts. Jesus summarized the Mosaic Law into 'love God with all your heart, mind, strength and love your neighbour as you love yourself. Jesus established the kingdom of God as a new community of God's people based on faith (the Christians).

Jesus fulfilled the new covenant prophecies The teachings of Jeremiah new covenant of hope and restoration is fulfilled in Jesus Christ and the new testament church (Christians) Heb.8:7 – 12.

LESSON FIVE. JEREMIAH'S TEACHINGS ON HOPE AND RESTORATION

Learning Outcomes

- (a) Explain the symbolic acts related to hope and restoration
- (b) Describe the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of the Israelites
- (c) Relate the relationship of the teachings of Jeremiah to the New Testament and Christian life today.

A. Symbolic acts related to hope and restoration.

The symbolic acts were one hope and restore. Hope is to expect something that is desired; while to restore is to bring back as nearly as possible the former or original state or condition. The symbolic acts were 5 in number.

The first symbolic act was a vision of 2 baskets of figs. We have discussed it. Refer to the symbolic act related to judgment.

The second symbolic act was Jeremiah buying a field. God instructed Jeremiah to buy a field from his cousin Hanamel of Anathoth. Jeremiah bought the field for 17 cents of silver. He then handed the title deed and open copy to Baruch. Baruch was told to keep the title deed and the copy in an earthen vessel for preservation for a long time. Jeremiah prophesied the restoration of the exiles to their homeland. The significance of this symbolic act is the assurance of restoration of Judah and Israel after suffering. People will be restored to their homeland. After 70 years people of Judah would reconstruct their homes, cultivate their land, and own property (Jer 32; 1 -15).

The third symbolic act was Jeremiah's letter to the Jews in Babylonia. Jeremiah wrote to the people of Judah a letter of encouragement while in exile. They were to settle down, build houses, marry and have children, live in peace with the Babylonians. They were to pray for the welfare of their masters and to ignore false prophets who lied to them about the safety of Jerusalem and a quick return. God would restore them back to their land after 70 years of exile were over. The exiles were to trust in God and not give up (Jer.29).

The fourth symbolic act was a wooden ox yoke. The yoke represented captivity and suffering of Jews in exile. It was also a sign of hope if the people of Judah were willing to submit to the Babylonian rule. God would restore them back to their land. Their yoke would be broken and they would be set free.

The fifth symbolic act was the visit to the porter's house

b. The fall of Jerusalem and the exile of the Israelites (Jer.39)

Jeremiah's prophecy came to pass. Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in the ninth year of king Zedekiah in 587BC. The Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and seized it. King Zedekiah fled but; he was captured by the Babylonians army. He witnessed the execution of his sons. His eyes were gauged out. He was then taken in chains to captivity in Babylon. Solomon's temple was looted and destroyed. Villages, Jerusalem and the palace were destroyed and burnt down. The priests, court officials, army officials, people in the upper class, craftsmen were executed. City people were taken to Babylon as captives. The poor, aged and a few people were left behind and given vineyards to farm.

Nebuchadnezzar's army was brutal to the Israelites. Many were killed. A few like Ebed – Melech were spared as prophesied by Jeremiah (he had rescued him from the well). Nebuchadnezzar ordered the release of Jeremiah. He was treated well

Judah became a province of Babylon. Gedaliah was appointed governor of Judah. He stayed at Mizpah, the headquarters of Judah. Ishmael killed Gedaliah. Later Jeremiah was forced to go to Egypt by the Israelites. Jeremiah died in Egypt, an old man, and still faithful to his call.

LESSON SIX. RELATING THE TEACHINGS OF JEREMIAH TO THE NEW TESTAMENT AND CHRISTIAN LIFE TODAY

Learning outcomes. By the end of the lesson you should be able to: -

1. Describe the teachings of Jeremiah in relation to Christian life today
2. Describe the teachings of Jeremiah in relation to the new testament

Jeremiah was rejected by his relatives, friends and the Israelites. In the New Testament, Jesus was rejected in his hometown of Nazareth and by the religious leaders of Israel. Jeremiah compared himself to a lamb being led to the slaughter. Jesus in the New Testament is referred to as a lamb led to the slaughter. Jeremiah's suffering symbolizes divine judgment over Judah. However Jesus sufferings was to bring salvation to all mankind. Both Jeremiah and Jesus experienced spiritual agony. Jeremiah experience agony and felt left alone by God. Jesus too felt agony when praying in the garden of Gethsemane and when on the cross.

Jeremiah taught that God is universal and a just judge. The gospel of Jesus is universal and everybody is judged according to his or her faith in God. Jeremiah and Jesus accused the Israelites of turning the temple into a "den of robbers". Jeremiah and Jesus were both accused of blasphemy. Both challenged false beliefs about the temple. Both Jeremiah and Jesus spoke of the coming judgment of God.

The new covenant was fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ Jeremiah spoke of hope and restoration. Jesus gives hope of eternal life in the New Testament.

ii. Relationship of Jeremiah's teaching to Christian today.

Christians are to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are empowered by the Holy Spirit to endure suffering and to grow spiritually. Christians like Jeremiah face false prophets who speak in Jesus name. Christians are to be watchful and obey Yahweh

Like Jeremiah Christians should call people to repentance. The new covenant is fulfilled in Christian's individual relationship with God. Christians are the new people, the new Israel as prophesied by Jeremiah. His teachings reveal that God is universal. Christians are from all corners of the earth. Christians should prepare for divine judgment by practicing love, righteousness, self-denial, and faith in God.

Revision exercise

1. List the evils that Jeremiah condemned
2. What are some of the evils that church leaders condemn today?

3. Explain the symbolism used during the call of prophet Jeremiah
4. What did Jeremiah teach about the new covenant?
5. Why did prophet Jeremiah condemn the way the Israelites worshipped?
6. Explain Jeremiah's temple sermon as recorded in Jeremiah 7: 1-15
7. What forms of punishment did Jeremiah prophesy that God would use on Judah?
8. Outline the content of Jeremiah's letter to exiles in Babylon
9. Explain four symbolic acts related to judgement and punishment as demonstrated by prophet Jeremiah
10. Identify the relevance of Jeremiah's teaching to Christians today
11. In what ways is the prophetic mission of Jeremiah similar to that of Jesus?

TOPIC SIX. NEHEMIAH

Introduction

The book of Nehemiah is a historical writing. Nehemiah is a record of his deep dependence on God and his frequent prayer to God. Nehemiah means "Yahweh has comforted." Nehemiah was the son of Hacaliah of Judah. He was not a prophet. He was exiled to Babylon. Persians captured Babylon and improved the living condition of the Israelites. They were allowed religious freedom but had to pay tributes.

Learning outcomes. By the end of this topic you should be able to;

- a. Describe the historical, religious and social background to Nehemiah
- b. Identify occasions when Nehemiah prayed
- c. Explain the importance of prayer in Christian life
- D. Describe leadership qualities of Nehemiah and relevance to Christians today.

LESSON ONE. BACKGROUND TO NEHEMIAH

Learning outcomes. After reading this lesson,

- i. Describe how the people of Judah lived and worshipped.
- ii. Explain the conquest of Israel and Judah by foreign forces
- iii. Give reasons why God allowed Judah and Israel to be conquered and exiled.

a. Political and historical background. From 587 BC to 538 BC, Israelites were in exile. In 538 B.C., the first group of Israelites was set free and returned to Judah. Cyrus the Great, of Persia ruled his subjects through governors. They were led out of Babylon by Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel who became the first governor of Judah.

Some Jews remained in Babylon. They were referred to as Jews in Diaspora or dispersion. Other Jews remained in other lands including Egypt, and Mediterranean lands

Nehemiah. He was a cupbearer in the palace of the Persian king Artaxerxes I. He later became a governor of Judah. Even after the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, Israelites remained subjects of the Persian king.

The Wall of Jerusalem was important to Israel and Judah. The Wall represented a sense of pride, ownership, privacy, independence and

Security. The Greeks conquered the Persians; who were later conquered by Romans.

b. Social background

The Jews in foreign lands retained their Jewish way of life. The land of Israel was partly occupied by foreigners. The foreign cultures of neighboring rulers influenced Israelites who returned. They for example, intermarried with foreigners, a custom that God did not allow. Israelites were not to intermarry with other people according to the Mosaic Law. In spite of this however, Jews maintained their separated identity. Some of the foreigners despised Jews. The wealthy Jews oppressed the poor Jews. In Jerusalem there was starvation. Nehemiah condemned oppression of the poor.

c. Religious background

Jews returned to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem and the altar of God for sacrifices. While in exile, Jews were allowed by the Babylonian king to practice their religion. They worshipped Yahweh, practiced circumcision, obeyed dietary laws and observed the Sabbath. The exiles could not however observe all the religious practices for example offering animal sacrifices.

Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to rebuild it's the wall. The temple of Jerusalem was rebuilt, cleared and dedicated to God.

LESSON TWO. Prayers by Nehemiah and modern Christians

Learning outcomes. After reading this lesson the learner should be able to:

- a. Outline occasions when Nehemiah prayed to the Lord.
- b. Discuss the importance of prayer

Nehemiah prayed, mourned, and fasted. He prayed often and for all actions, keeping God's law, forgiveness, punishments, human relations, Jerusalem, good works, contributions and offerings, observance of Sabbath day, and preparing duty allocations for priests and Levites. .

- i. When he learnt about the suffering of Jews who remained in Judah and the ruined state of Jerusalem; He prayed for forgiveness on behalf of his people (Neh.4: 1 – 11).
- ii. Making a request to King Artaxerxes to be permitted to return to Judah (Neh.2: 4 –
- iii. When his enemies ridiculed the Jews and planned to discourage them from rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Tobiah in particular said that the wall was poorly constructed and it could be brought down by a fox jumping on it. Nehemiah requested God to punish the enemies who were mocking temple builders (Neh.4: 4 – 5).
- iv. When he learnt that his enemies were conspiring to attack Jerusalem to stop the construction work, he prayed and organised people to provide a 24-hour guard of the wall (Neh.4: 7 – 9).
- .v. For his good work, he prayed for his works (Neh 5:19).
- vi. When his enemies plotted to destroy him, he prayed God for strength and courage to overcome his enemies (Neh 6: 19).
- vii. When Shemaih attempted to frighten him to hide in the temple claiming that there was a plot to kill him, Nehemiah prayed and asked God to punish his enemies (Neh 6:14).
- viii. When he organized contributions for Levites and musicians; and people to distribute them. He asked God to remember his work for the house of God (Neh 13:14).
- ix. He stopped trade on the Sabbath day, and organised rest on the Sabbath day. He warned traders against violating the Sabbath law. He asked Lord to remember him for these actions (Neh.13: 22).
- x. Nehemiah prayed for punishment of the son of Joiada. The son of Joiada had brought disgrace to the priest hood by marrying a foreigner, the daughter of Sanballat from the town of Beth Horon, (Neh 13:29). After cleansing the Israelites of foreign influence, he forbade mixed marriages
- xi. He prepared duty regulations for priests and Levites. He allocated them duties. He then organised Jews to bring offerings for maintaining priests and Levites. He prayed God to remember his work for the temple, priests and Levites (Neh 13:31).

b. Importance of prayer in Christian life

Through prayers, Christians express their faith in God and praise God for his greatness, goodness, holiness, and majesty. Prayer brings Christians closer to God; it strengthens their relationship with God. Through prayer Christians request for their needs, blessings, success, good health, and protection among other requests.

Prayers help Christians to listen to God and to seek his will. Prayer is a source of strength. It gives Christians courage to face and overcome life's challenges. Christians seek guidance, comfort and support in times of trials. In prayer, Christians intercede for the sick, poor, hungry, prisoners, friends, family and community. The communal / public prayers unite Christians together. Through prayers, Christians ask for forgiveness and the ability to forgive others. In prayers, Christians trust that God listens and answers their prayers.

LESSON THREE: LEADERSHIP QUALITIES OF NEHEMIAH

Learning outcomes. By the end of the lesson you should be able to: -

1. State the leadership qualities of Nehemiah
2. Explain the relevance of Nehemiah's leadership qualities to Christians today

Introduction. A leader is someone charged with the responsibility of guiding, controlling, directing and leading others. Nehemiah had many leadership qualities. These were: -

- 1) God fearing man. Nehemiah feared God, relied and depended on God.
- 2) Prayerfulness – he prayed constantly before and after making decisions.
- 3) Courageous – He displayed courage even when his life was in danger
- 4) Hard work and commitment. He was dedicated to the rebuilding of the wall of the temple and Jerusalem.
- 5) Team spirit – he was a team leader, motivating people to work.
- 6) He had planning and organizational skills
- 7) He was visionary

He had compassion for the needy especially the poor, Levites and priests

9) He was patriotic loved his country

10) Wisdom. He made wise decisions at the right time.

11) He led by example, a role model

12) He was honest and sincere in his prayers

13) He was shrewd and impartial

14) He trusted God absolutely.

15) He was decisive. He told God about decisions he had made and asked for their recognition.

16) He was humble. He asked to be allowed to return to Jerusalem and oversee the repair of its wall and temple.

16) He believed in law and punishment of wrong doers. He asked God to punish lawbreakers especially Jews who married foreigners.

b. Relevance of Nehemiah's leadership to Christians today

Christians should copy all the leadership qualities of Nehemiah. They should trust in God and seek his guidance in all their activities and needs.

1. Christians should live a life of prayer

2. Christians should be courageous, be ready to defend the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. Christians should be dedicated to their work. Work diligently and honestly

4. Christians should set realistic goals and organize their activities.

5. Christians should seek wisdom from God to be able to choose appropriate activities to attain their visions.

6. Christians should care for the needy and be compassionate to all

7. Christians should be patriotic and ready to defend their country against internal / external threats.

8. Christians should need to fight for the rights of the helpless children, widows, orphans, and aged.

9. Christians should seek God first, view themselves as servants of God and be good role models.

LESSON FOUR. BUILDING THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

The wall of Jerusalem was destroyed when Babylonians conquered Judah. After finishing the wall, he dedicated it to the Lord. Dedication is to devote something in honor of a person held dear or to set aside something for some special purpose.

Learning Outcomes. After reading this lesson, you should be able to: -

- a. Describe the problems that Nehemiah faced when building the wall of Jerusalem
- b. Describe the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem
- c. Identify lessons, which Christians can learn from Nehemiah.

a. Nehemiah rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem. The rebuilt wall had several gates with different names. The gates were the entrances to Jerusalem. Their names were Dung gate, Potsherd gate, Fountain gate, Water gate, Horse gate, East gate, Sheep gate, Fish gate, Watch gate and Ephraim gate. Knowing the names of the gates may not be necessary but its good information.

b. Problems faced by Nehemiah. When Nehemiah was building the wall of Jerusalem, he faced many challenges. There was lack of cooperation by the nobles of Tekoa. They did not want to do manual work at first but they later repented. Nehemiah faced opposition from enemies such as Sanballat, and Tobiah, the Arab who tried to thwart the progress of Nehemiah's work.

As he built Jerusalem, the rich oppressed the poor. This was worsened by famine

The priests misused the temple and the offerings. For example, temple duties had been abandoned. The Levites were not getting their share of the offerings and the Sabbath was violated. There was laxity in observance of the Sabbath. This was a challenge to Nehemiah because Sabbath day should be kept holy.

There was a lot of foreign influence because of the conquests by several foreign armies, intermarriages and interactions between Jews, neighboring people and foreigners. Marriages in particular threatened the identity of the Israelites as a nation. Worse still Priests married to foreign women defiled the priesthood according to Nehemiah. Because of these assimilations of Jews through marriages, Nehemiah knew that Israel and Judah would eventually be lost as God's nation. Because of his opposition to these interactions, Nehemiah received death threats.

- c. Dedication of the wall of Jerusalem (NEH. 12:27 – 47)

The rebuilt wall was dedicated to God. The wall restored security and prestige of God's people. The wall of Jerusalem was set-aside for God in a solemn ceremony. There was a dedication ceremony in which

people sang with symbols, harps, lyres, trumpets and other instruments. The priests, and Levites purified themselves.

The people led by Ezra, Nehemiah, the priests and other leaders of Judah walked around the wall. They divided themselves into two groups. One group walked from the right side and the other group from the left side and converged at the temple. Sacrifices were offered and people rejoiced. Some men were appointed to be in charge of the storehouses; where tithes, and first fruits of harvest were kept.

d. Relevance of Nehemiah's experience to Christians today

Christians should expect opposition, as did Nehemiah. They should not be afraid of being ridiculed, mocked and despised. If it happens, Christians should persevere in God's work. They should put their trust in God like Nehemiah did.

They should also fight for the welfare of the disadvantaged groups and not exploit them. They have a moral obligation to condemn injustice and take practical steps to help solve problems that afflict individuals, groups, nations, and society. They should be in the forefront fighting HIV/ AIDS and drug abuse.

Christians should be on the look out for external influence that may corrupt morals of the society and the church. They should learn that leadership involves suffering, persecution, and sacrifices. This is foregoing personal interests for the sake of the kingdom of God.

LESSON FIVE: RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT

Learning outcomes. After reading this lesson, you should be able to: -

- i. List the stages followed to renew the covenant.
- ii. Identify issues that Ezra mentioned in his prayer
- iii. List the vows that were made by the Israelites during renewal of the covenant

i. Stages of the renewal of the covenant. Israelites were the chosen people of God. They had suffered many hardships. There was therefore a need for the renewal of the covenant between God and Israelites. The ceremony to renew the covenant was held in Jerusalem and was led by Ezra, the Levites and other religious leaders. The renewal of the covenant can be discussed in 3 main stages:

Stage 1. A great public assembly was held in the square of Jerusalem inside the water gate. God's law was read and expounded to the people. The people of Israel praised and worshipped God. They cried and grieved. They were sad because they realized that they had failed to observe the Mosaic Law. They were instructed to go and celebrate, as it was a holy day of God and an occasion for joy not sorrows.

State 2. The feast of booths/tabernacle was celebrated for 7 days. It was a reminder of the days in the wilderness when the Israelites dwelt in tents. The Law of Moses was read each day during the celebrations.

Stage 3. There was a public confession of sin. People fasted, prayed and praised God. The public confession was followed by the renewal of the covenant vows and a promise to keep God's law in future.

Ezra's prayer closed the celebrations. In his prayer, he recalled God's acts of creation. He then recounted the history of the Israelites. He mentioned the previous acts of God; where the Lord had demonstrated His love and mercy for the Israelites. He then confessed the sins of their ancestors and the present Israelites. These were the sins of rebellion and disobedience.

ii. Promises and vows made by Israelites during the renewal of the covenant. Israelites promised God that they would

- Live according to God's law, by obeying all his commands and requirements.
- Stop intermarrying with foreigners living in their land.
- Cancel debts every 7th year
- Contribute annually towards the temple expenses to ensure that the house of God was not neglected.
- Provide sacrifices and offerings for the temple and arrange for provision of wood for burnt sacrifices according to the law.
- Offer first fruits of their harvest and dedicate the first born and flocks as required by the law.
- Pay for their tithes as required by the law.

Which lessons can we learn from the renewal of the covenant? God is good, loving, merciful, and faithful to his promises. God forgives all people and we are all sinners. We fail in our moral obligation to God and to one another.

Since we are sinners, we should repent our sins and strive to live according to God's law. Christians are to encourage one another as well as others to repent as it brings about reconciliation with God and with one another.

Christians should be forgiving and avoid situations that lead them to sin

SAQ. Check from form 1 work, this information.

1. Outline Nehemiah's final reforms
2. What is a covenant?
3. What are the components of a covenant?
4. Discuss how the covenant was renewed
5. List examples of covenants in the Old Testament and modern life.
6. Explain what Christians can learn from the experiences of Nehemiah
7. Compare or relate the teachings from Nehemiah's exemplary life to the teaching of St. Luke's Gospel and Christian life today.

LESSON SIX: FINAL REFORMS OF NEHEMIAH

Introduction. Changes for improvement are known as reforms, which are either political, economical, social, religious or a combination of any of them. Examples of reformers are King David, Prophet Elijah, and Martin Luther King among others.

Nehemiah. After building the wall, Nehemiah went back to King Artaxerxes II who if you remember had given permission to go to Jerusalem and build its destroyed perimeter wall. Later he returned to Jerusalem and carried out these reforms.

Lesson outcomes. After reading this lesson, you should be able to:

- a. List reforms of Nehemiah
- b. Suggest what we can learn from the teachings of Nehemiah and that of St. Luke's Gospel

a. Reforms by Nehemiah. We have discussed reforms, which Nehemiah carried out during his stay in Judah, where he was the governor (Neh 5:14). The major reforms were

i Rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem as well as its gates.

ii Cleansing of the temple: Nehemiah threw out Tobiah a foreigner who was living in the temple quarters.

iii Reinstatement of the Levites and other temple workers. Levites, and musicians had left the temple duties to work in their farms to earn a livelihood. They were supposed to work in the temple and be supported by member contributions. Nehemiah organised Jews to make offerings and tithes to support temple workers. With these contributions, Nehemiah reinstated and redeployed Levites, priests, musicians and other temple workers.

iv Reform of the Sabbath observance. The Israelites were told by the Lord to work for 6 days and rest on the Sabbath day. The Jews started working on the Sabbath day. The merchants camped outside waiting for the reopening of the gates of the temple to do business. When Nehemiah started rebuilding Jerusalem, he ordered closure of the gates of Jerusalem from the eve of Sabbath to the end of the Sabbath.

v Separations from foreigners (Neh.13: 23 – 30). It was against God's law to marry foreigners. Nehemiah cursed the men who had married foreign wives. He beat Jews, pulled their hair and forced them to take oaths that neither they, nor their sons nor daughters shall intermarry.

vi Purification of priesthood and the office of the Levites. Nehemiah cleansed the priesthood. He sent away Eliashib, a grandson of the High Priest Joshua, because he had given Tobiah a foreigner, a room in the temple.

b. Comparing teachings of Nehemiah and St. Luke's Gospel

i Nehemiah lived a prayerful life while St. Luke's gospel emphasizes importance of prayer. Jesus taught the role of prayer in Christianity.

ii Nehemiah fasted, St. Luke's gospel records that Jesus fasted.

iii Nehemiah prayed for forgiveness of sinful Jews. We see Jesus in St. Luke's gospel being a leader who prayed for the forgiveness of his enemies.

iv Nehemiah cared for the needy. Jesus showed compassion to the needy and taught his followers to follow His example.

v Nehemiah condemned evil so did Jesus

vi Nehemiah is seen as a reformer of the Mosaic Law. In St Luke Gospel, Jesus was also a reformer. He insisted on inner holiness.

vii Nehemiah cleansed the temple of traders so did Jesus.

viii Nehemiah was very strict on the Sabbath observance. St. Luke's gospel teaches that Jesus is lord over Sabbath. He healed and "Worked" on Sabbath.

ix Nehemiah was opposed to racial intermarriages, St. Luke Gospel was dedicated to Theophilus, a gentile convert

x Christianity kingdom of God in St. Luke's gospel is for all, not just the Jews.

xi. Nehemiah had good leadership skills and wisdom. These are demonstrated in St Luke Gospel.

c. Relating Nehemiah's teachings to Christian life today

i Prayers and fasting are fundamental to Christians just like they were to Nehemiah who led a prayerful life.

ii Nehemiah's example teaches Christians to face all forms of opposition with courage, wisdom, and firmness

iii The good leadership qualities of Nehemiah are relevant to Christians and they are to be emulated.

iv Nehemiah cared for the needy. Christians should learn to give spiritual food, physical food and clothing to the needy, orphans, widows.

v As Nehemiah renewed the covenant, Christians should seek spiritual renewal publicly and privately. They should seek for communal as well as individual forgiveness.

vi Nehemiah cleansing the temple and organised an inventory for temple contributions, offerings and tithes. He also appointed key people to look after temple contributions and pay Levites and priests. Christians should learn to use the church buildings and contributions rightly

vii Nehemiah was guided by the Law of Moses and land just like Christians are guided by the scriptures (Bible) and the law of the nation. The Bible is the source and basis of Christian principles.

Revision questions

1. Describe the political background of Nehemiah
2. Describe the social background to the vocation of Nehemiah
3. Describe the religious background to the vocation of Nehemiah
4. Describe occasions when Nehemiah prayed
5. State occasions when Christians pray
6. What is the importance of prayer in Christian life?
7. Identify the leadership of Nehemiah's patriotism
8. Explain the relevance of Nehemiah's leadership to a Christian today
9. Explain the relevance of Nehemiah's experience to Christians today
10. explain the problems that Nehemiah encountered in his vocation
11. Explain the steps taken by Nehemiah to renew the covenant
12. State the promises the Israelites made during the renewal of the covenant

Study activities. Visit a church or your church and observe the display of the gifts of the Holy Spirit by the members. Study the books of Amos, Jeremiah and Nehemiah before hand.

Form three answers.

TOPIC ONE: THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Qn a. Explain the meaning of the Pentecost.

- Pentecost means fifty days after the harvest.
- It was one of the religious festivals celebrated by Israelites annually.
- In the Old Testament, the day of the Pentecost was celebrated during the wheat harvest in order to thank god for the blessing of the harvest.
- Israelites came from all over the world and gathered in Jerusalem for this celebration.
- In the New Testament, the meaning of the festival changed. It was celebrated to commemorate the coming of the Holy Spirit upon God's people as they gathered in the upper room.

Qn b. Describe the manifestations of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2: 1-40) OR (narrate the events that took place on the day of Pentecost).

- Disciples gathered in a room.
- Sounds came from heaven like a rush of mighty wind and filled the house.
- There appeared tongues of fire.
- The tongues of fire were distributed on each one of them.
- They were filled with the Holy Spirit.
- They were speaking in foreign languages and tongues.
- Those who were observing them were amazed, as they could not understand what they were saying.
- They accused them of being drunk
- Peter stood up and explained that they were not drunk as it was too early in the day to get drunk.
- He explained how they were filled with the Holy Spirit as prophesied by prophet Joel.
- He told them that it was Jesus whom they had rejected and crucified who had sent them the Holy Spirit.
- The people asked peter what they could do.
- Peter told them to repent and be baptized.
- On that day about 3000 people were added to the church.

Qn c. write down five teachings we learn about Jesus from Peter's speech on the day of Pentecost.

- Jesus was from Nazareth
- He had a divine nature or was son of God
- He had a human nature
- He was attested by God to work miracles and wonders through Jesus.
- Jesus' death/ crucifixion was according to God's plan
- God raised Jesus from the dead
- Jesus conquered death

- The death and resurrection of Jesus fulfils the prophecy of David
- Jesus was a descendant of David
- The Holy Spirit was from Jesus Christ as he had promised.
- God has made Jesus Christ both lord and Christ/ messiah
- Jesus ascended into heaven. He is exalted at the right hand of God
- The risen Christ is a source of hope or salvation to many sinners/crippled/the dead

Qn d. What were the qualities of Peter that made him a successful leader for the apostolic church?

- He was a man of great faith
- He was a good orator
- He dedicated his life to Jesus
- He was filled with the Holy Spirit
- He could perform miracles or wonders
- He was an eye-witness of the ministry of Jesus Christ.
- He was full of wisdom and knowledge i.e. Anania's and Saphira's case

Qn e. what lessons can Christians learn from the events of the day of Pentecost

- They learn that Jesus always honors and keeps his promises e.g. he promised to send the Holy Spirit and did it
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit is very important for every believer
- That obedience yields immediate results i.e. the disciples obeyed Jesus by testifying in Jerusalem and they received the Holy Spirit.
- It is important for believers to meet for fellowship. The disciples did this and they received the Holy Spirit
- That the Holy Spirit enables Christians to declare the gospel with boldness
- It was the plan of God that Jesus was crucified
- Jesus indeed rose from the dead as Peter witnessed

- Jesus was the son of God

Qn f. state the teachings of Jesus on the Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit comes from the father
- The Holy Spirit will comfort disciples
- The Holy Spirit will abide with believers forever. He was to teach the world and reveal the truth about God
- The Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth and make them understand or know more about Jesus
- The percolate i.e. comforter/make strong/counselor who give advice
- He was to help them attain eternal life. If it was necessary for him to die and return to the father so that Holy Spirit will be sent to them. It was to replace Jesus as a counselor and an advocate
- He was to give the disciples authority to forgive or not to forgive
- The spirit would remind them all that Jesus had taught them
- The holy spirit will reprove the world of sin, righteousness and judgement
- He would glorify Jesus amongst the believers
- He will enable believers to be witnesses of Jesus in the whole world
- He was to strengthen disciples as a wonderful counselor
- He was to continue with the work of Jesus as a witness

Qn g. what is the role of the holy spirit according to Jesus?

- He comforts believers
- He teaches believers all things
- He bring into remembrance all that Jesus taught his disciples
- The holy spirit would convict the world of their sins and lead them to righteousness
- He will guide the believers in all the truth
- He will glorify Christ and teach about him

- He will tell of the things to come in the future
- He would not speak on his own authority but would speak only what he hears from the father
- He will enable believers to be witnesses of Jesus in the world
- He will counsel believers because he knows the mind of God
- He will enable believers know the perfect will of God

Qn h. what is the role of the Holy Spirit in the believers (or Christians or the church)

- He enables believers to preach with power
- He comforts believers
- He guides believers in all truth
- He gives believers boldness to witness about Jesus
- He enables Christians to produce the fruit of the spirit
- He washes sacrifices and justifies the believer in the name of Jesus
- He teaches believers all things
- He enables Christians to access God the father and son in prayer
- He enables Christians talk in tongues in worship
- He enables Christians to perform miracles in the name of Jesus
- He enables Christians to declare sins and transgressions of others

Qn i. Outline the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:6-26)

- Love showing compassion to one another
- Joy deep happiness when one has a good relationship with God
- Peace being at peace with all people
- Patience being to wait in difficulties
- Kindness being caring and helpful towards others

- Goodness seeking to do best in their lives
- Faithfulness having confidence in God
- Gentleness being calm and avoiding violence
- Self-control have strong control over their emotions

Qn.j. state the criteria for discerning of the spiritual gifts

- The gift must glorify Jesus so that one who is under the influence of the Holy Spirit will be able to recognize Jesus as lord and savior
- The gifts must not call Jesus accursed
- The test of love. The gift must be accompanied with a good or true fruit. To discover whether or not the person who has the holy spirit must bear the fruits of the spirit
- One who is under the influence of the Holy Spirit is known by his or her way of life. He/she will act and behave in accordance with the teachings of Jesus.
- Doctrinal test for example, prophecy should always be in agreement with the scripture because the Holy Spirit cannot contradict what is written
- Loyalty or conformity to Jesus. The gift doesn't envy other believers
- The gift must be subject to the word of God
- The true gift will be guided by principles of sincerity and honesty
- The true gift will humbly submit to God
- The gift should encourage the growth of the church and edify her

Qn.k. List down the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

- The gift of wisdom (a deep understanding of who God is and his purpose for human life)
- The gift of knowledge that is the basic understanding of the truth about Jesus Christ
- The gift of faith that refers to the confidence or trust in God's inspiration and help in undertaking difficult tasks
- The gift of healing: the power to heal all types of sicknesses

- The gift to perform all types of miracles including healing
- The gift of prophecy: that is the ability to expound on the scriptures and foretell its future implications
- The gift of distinguishing gifts: the ability to tell the difference between gifts that come from the spirit and those that are not
- The gift of speaking in tongues: the ability to understand and interpret tongues
- Lastly the gift of love, which is the greatest of all the spiritual gifts.

Qn l. Explain why Paul taught that love is the greatest of all spiritual gifts.

- Paul taught that love is the greatest of all spiritual gifts. He said that love is patient and kind
- It's not jealous or boastful. It is not arrogant or rude or conceited. It does not hold grudges or ill mannered or selfish
- It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful
- It does not rejoice at wrong doings but rejoices in the truth
- Love bears, believes, hopes and endures all things
- It is ready to deep firm its faith, hope and its patience
- Love does not succumb to pressure but always perseveres
- He justified that love is the greatest gift of the spiritual gifts because in prayer, the gift of tongues becomes nothing but meaningful when accompanied by love (charity)
- On faith, Paul says that even if one has faith that can move mountains but has no love, he is nothing
- Charity or generosity including sacrificing own life is nothing without love

Qn m. Explain how the Holy Spirit is manifested in the church today

- Through dynamic, power, bold and vigorous teaching of the gospel
- Through speaking in tongues in many evangelical churches
- Through the gift of healing many people are healed as they are prayed for
- Through the gift of love, Christians show mercy to all members of the society regardless of their race, sex or age (helping the poor in the society)

- Through the gift of prophecy some believers give proper guidance to the church
- Through the gift of discernment of spirits believers are able to tell the type of spirit that is in operation
- Through the gift of faith, believers have been able to accomplish tasks that seem rather impossible
- Some Christians through the holy spirit are able to withstand a persecution to the point of death
- The holy spirit convicts sinners and makes them confess their sins
- Through the holy spirit many Christians see heavenly visions and dreams
- The fear of the lord is upon many evangelical groups through the Holy Spirit
- In some evangelical gatherings, there are many supernatural things during worship e.g. shaking and swaying
- It is also manifested through prayer at individual or congregational levels
- Through decision making in church i.e. solving problems and issues in church
- Through singing and dancing or music
- Through offertory and alms or sadaka
- Holding fellowship meetings, bible study and reading the bible
- Celebration of sacraments e.g. Eucharist and lord's supper
- Bringing new converts to the church
- Pastoral care and counseling It is manifested in Ecumenism: working together of the churches
- Writing Christian literature e. g. books, pamphlets and magazines
- Enabling Christians to confess their sins and reconciliation meetings
- Education and giving instructions

Qn n: State ways in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit have been abused in the church today.

- Cheating that one has a certain gift of the Holy Spirit
- Commercialization of the gifts. People are asked to pay money before being prayed for or being healed
- False interpretation of the bible, prophecy or predicting the future

- Unscrupulous Christians may impart demoniac powers or innocent faithful
- Some Christians who possess the gifts of the Holy Spirit develop pride or selfishness or superiority complex
- Wrong use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit where faithful get into ecstasy or trance which may lead to injuries
- Distinguishing oneself as a person with a special call e.g. preacher with intention of exploiting others or situations

TOPIC TWO: UNITY OF BELIEVERS

Qn a. Write down the terms used in the New Testament to refer to believers in Christ

- The people of God
- The body of Christ
- The bride of Christ
- The vine and the branches
- The assembly of God
- Christians
- The people of the way (followers of the way) other terms
- Followers of Christ
- New Israel
- Church
- The sheep
- The royal church
- Brethren
- Royal race
- Royal priest hood
- Holy nation
- The children of light

- Saints
- Brothers and sisters in Christ

Qn b. identify five causes of disunity in the early church

- The question on the inclusion of the gentiles in the church. Some Jewish Christians were not ready to accept gentile Christians in the church unless they underwent circumcision
- There was negligence of the widows in the distribution of food
- Disagreement between and among leaders e.g. Paul and Barnabas, Peter and Paul
- Groupings in the church where some Christians owed loyalty to individuals. They said that they belonged to individuals like Apollos others Peter and others Paul
- Question of immorality, where some Christians did not live according to the teachings of Christ
- The problem of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Some Christians became arrogant because they were more gifted than others
- Different interpretations of the doctrines e.g. resurrection, sin, salvation, Christology, Holy Spirit, dressing
- Behaviour during the lord's supper
- Christians took others to a pagan rule of law
- Question of the resurrection of the body
- Question of celibacy
- Question of incest sexual immorality
- Different approaches to common life between Christians communities in Jerusalem and Antioch

Qn c. identify factors, which cause disunity among Christians today

- Selfishness or greed for money by some Christians
- Rivalry or competition for leadership positions or greed for power
- Misinterpretation by some Christians of the work of the holy spirit
- Arrogance or pride by some Christians

- Corruption in the church
- Failure by some Christians to live according to the law of God or their failure to live exemplary
- Lack of concern by some Christians about the plight of others
- Misinterpretation of the bible or doctrinal differences
- Misuse of church funds or power by some leaders
- Lack of transparency and accountability in running church affairs
- The emergence of charismatic movements in the church creates a situation where some Christians think that they are more spiritual or holier than others
- Political interference where Christians find themselves in different political camps
- Sexism where women are not involved in decision-making. Women are under represented
- Discrimination against the youth or churches ignoring the youth in running the church
- Tribalism where Christians are divided along tribal lines
- International differences

Qn d. Discuss reasons why members of Christian families in Kenya find it difficult to harmoniously live together

- Unfaithfulness or promiscuity
- Misuse of family resources or lack of resources
- Child abuse e.g. beating, raping, incest or favourism
- Alcoholism or drug use and abuse
- Separation of family members e.g. due to wage labour or education
- Denial of conjugal rights
- Sickness e.g. HIV/AIDs, impotence, barrenness or cancer
- Child delinquency
- Lack of tolerance or forgiveness or presence of cruelty
- Greed for wealth or self esteemed prestige or professionalism

- Religious fanaticism or denominational differences
- Traditional or cultural inhabitation or western cultural influences or permissive
- Generation gap

Qn e. explain how the church strengthen family relationships today

- Through guidance and counseling and mediation
- Hold seminars, conferences for couples, children the youth through publications on Christian living e.g. magazines, books or pamphlets
- Use of mass media e.g. televisions. Radios or videos
- Through offering pastoral care in homes or house to house visits
- Giving financial support to the needy families
- Praying for families
- Through preaching, teaching and condemning vices
- Offering employment to the jobless
- Providing vocational training skills

SELECTED OLD PROPHETS AND THEIR TEACHINGS.

Q1. Define the terms prophet and prophecy

Prophet: Refers to one who speaks God's message. He is God's spokesman. His message includes predictions of the future.

Prophecy: Is the message spoken by a prophet. Oracles spoken by prophets.

Q2. List the five categories of true prophets

i) Major prophets

- These include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.
- They are called Major Prophets because the books are long and contain clearly written messages.
- They bear the names of the writers.

ii) Minor prophets

- These refer to 12 books that are short and contain less important than those in major books e.g. Amos, Hosea, Joel, Obadiah through to Malachi.

iii) Canonical prophets

- Both the major and minor prophets are together referred to as canonical prophets.

iv) The early prophets

- They belonged to guilds or schools.
- They lived together in communities under a chief prophet. Elijah and Elisha are examples.
- These are those who served in places of worship e.g. at Dan, Bethuel)
- They were called cultic prophets because they were associated with religious activities in shrines.
- They traveled around together delivering oracles.

v) Cultic prophets

- They worked side by side with priests and said prayers especially people's petition to Yahweh.

Q3. State the difference between true and false prophets

True prophets False prophets

- They were called by God to be His spokesmen Not called by God.

- Were obedient to God. Not obedient to Him.
- Believed in one God. Could worship other gods and led people into immorality.
- They were prayerful. Not.
- Spoke and acted with authority from God. No authority from God.
- They led holy lives. Were immoral e.g. believed in false gods.
- Spoke God's word. Spoke their opinion.
- Suffered physically and psychologically because of speaking the truth. Run away suffering.
- Spoke the truth. False
- Did not ask for pay. Asked for pay.
- Spoke from a common tradition based on the Mosaic Law. Did not have any reference.

Q4. In what ways were God's prophets called?

- Some were called through visions or dreams e.g. Amos and Samuel.
- Others were called through other prophets e.g. Elisha.
- Words or message came into their minds.
- Through prophetic symbolic actions e.g. Jeremiah
- Through common objects – an object becoming a significant sign of God's power and activities Jer. 1:11-13.
- Through prayers.

Q5. Outline the similarities and differences between the Old Testament prophets and the Traditional African Ones

a) Similarities:

- Both possessed spiritual powers.

- Both were mediators between people and a Supreme Being.
- Both performed the role of healing people physically and spiritually (miracle).
- They received calls mainly through visions/dreams, which were considered supernatural.
- Were both expected to be people of integrity and obedient to religious codes.
- Gave warnings and solutions to their people in case they offended the Supreme Being.
- Foretold the future.

b) Differences:

Old Testament Tradition African

- Received their message from God Received their message from spirits and ancestors.
- Appointed by God. Inherited
- Rejected by people Respected and feared in society
- Prophecy went to other nations Confined in tribal community
- Prophecies preserved in writing Passed on orally
- Believe and worship of one God Believe in god spirits
- Performed miracles Did not

Q6. What is the relevant of prophets to Christians today?

- Through reading their prophecies, Christians get to know the will of God.
- Jesus who is the cornerstone of Christianity is stressed throughout prophecy – since Abraham.
- Prophecy has helped many to be preachers (i.e. prophecy = preaching).
- Christians learn to be faithful to Yahweh just like the Old Testament prophets.
- They too learn to be holy and prayerful like them e.g. Jeremiah.

- Prophets encouraged justice e.g. Elijah, Christians should do the same.
- As prophets, Christians should provide hope to the people in times of suffering.
- They learn that they can face suffering just like the prophets did e.g. Jeremiah e.g. persecution, rejection etc.
- They should condemn sin like the prophets.
- The writings of the prophets strengthen their faith when they need them.

PROPHET AMOS

Q1. List the visions that Amos saw

- He saw a swarm of locusts. Amos 7:1-3
- He saw a great fire. Amos 7:4-6
- The plumb line/crooked wall. Amos 7:7-8
- Basket of ripe fruits. Amos 8:1-3
- The destruction of the temple. Amos 9:1-4

Q2. Explain the evils that Amos condemned in his teachings

- Sexual immorality (Amos 2:17)
 - Amos condemned temple prostitution – 23:17.
 - Father and son were going to the same woman.
 - They copied these from the Canaanite pagans, which was wrong and unfaithful to Yahweh.
- Slavery: (Amos 2:6)

The righteous, the rich made the poor slaves. This is because they borrowed from the rich and could not repay so they made them work like slaves and treated them harshly. Some sold them for a pair of sandals. This was breaking God's laws, which guided them on how to treat their poor fellow Israelites.

□ Idolatry: Amos 5:26

Amos accused them for breaking God's covenant by worshipping other gods.

□ Cheating in Business: He condemned the following:

- Merchants used false measures
- They overcharged the poor
- Sold goods of low quality
- They sold poor people for not paying debts
- They too charged high interest rates

□ Bribery and Corruption Ex. 23:8

- He condemned elders who were unjust and corrupt.
- They took bribes and grew rich from heavy levies from innocent people in law courts.

□ Greed and excessive luxury

- He condemned women of Samaria who drink and lived in luxury when there were poor needy people.

□ Breaking God's law on garments secured for pledges

- God gave Israelites items that were to be given out to the creditors as a guarantee for the goods borrowed e.g. Millstones for grinding, were to be taken and returned in the evening because they were used daily.

□ Robbery and Violence

- Poor were being oppressed and violated.

Self – Indulgence and false sense of security

• Leaders thought God could not punish them because they were a chosen race.

• But Amos told them they would be attacked.

Q3. Give reasons why Prophet Amos condemned idol worship in Israel

It broke the covenant way of life.

It was against the 10 commandments, which directed the Israelites to worship one God.

It was a sign of disobedience to God.

It promoted immorality e.g. temple prostitution.

The worship of God belittled and degraded God.

It promoted falsehood in the society.

Religion became commercialized.

Led to false prophecy.

People got concerned with external behavior and not internal.

Q4. List evils in society today that Amos would condemn

Tribalism

Bribery and corruption

Robbery with violence

Dishonesty in business

Grabbing of public land and property

Stealing

Oppression of the poor e.g. underpayment

□ Immorality e.g. prostitution

PROPHET JEREMIAH

Q1. List evils that Jeremiah condemned

- Human sacrifice
- Hypocrisy in worship
- Dishonesty in business
- Defilement of the temple – temple prostitution
- Social injustice
- Idolatry
- False prophecy
- Necromancy
- Exploitation of the poor

Q2. What are some of the evils that the church leaders condemn today?

- Hypocrisy/pretence in worship
- Murder/suicide/abortion/genocide
- Exploitation of the poor/robbery
- Dishonesty
- False prophets
- Human sacrifices among devil worshippers
- Sexual immorality e.g. adultery

Q3. Explain the symbolisms used during the call of Prophet Jeremiah

- God touched Jeremiah's mouth. This was to symbolize that God was the source of the message. Jeremiah was to deliver.
- A branch of an almond tree that was bare – God was watching to see the fulfillment of the message he gave to Jeremiah.
- A pot of boiling facing away from the North and about to tilt toward Judah. God would use a nation from the North to bring judgement on the people of Judah because of their wickedness.
- A fortified city. A bronze wall and an iron pillar. God was going to protect him even though he was going to meet opposition.
- To uproot and pull down, to destroy and overthrow. God would pass judgement on the nation of Judah and other nations.
- To build and to plant. There was still hope of the restoration of people of Judah after exile.

Q4. What did Jeremiah teach about the New Covenant?

- The new covenant was to be written in people's hearts.
- The covenant was to be made between God and the remnant community after exile.
- The people were to have a personal knowledge of God in the new covenant.
- God was to forgive their sin and remember them no more.
- Each individual was responsible for his own sins.
- The new covenant was to be initiated by God.
- The new covenant was to last forever.
- It was as a result in the emergence of a new people of God or new Israel.

Q5. Why did Prophet Jeremiah condemn the way the Israelites worshipped?

- They broke God's commands e.g. the 1st and do not worship other gods – they worshipped idols.
- They practiced hypocrisy i.e. they were concerned with external religious observance while their hearts were far from God.
- They forgot the saving history of God and worshipped other gods e.g. Asherah.
- They practiced syncretism i.e. they worshipped both Yahweh and foreign Gods.
- They listened to false prophets and rejected God's prophets e.g. Jeremiah. They even killed some.
- They dishonored the sanctity of human life by offering human sacrifice.
- They neglected the disadvantaged (widows & orphans).
- They were dishonest in business and deceitful to one another.
- They narrowed themselves in necromancy, divination and magic.
- They rebelled against God by breaking the covenant relationship.

Q6. Explain Jeremiah's temple sermon as recorded in Jeremiah 7:1-15

- God commanded prophet Jeremiah to speak in the temple.
- It was a response to the people of Israel to stop understanding religion through the practice of syncretism and immorality.
- At the gate to the temple, Jeremiah proclaimed that the people of Judah had to change their way of life and stick to the covenant they made with God.
- They had to stop defiling the temple of placing idols in it.
- They had to stop committing social injustices and as murderer/exploitation of the weak, orphans widows and foreigners.
- The practice of human sacrifice was murder and displeasing to God.
- Hypocrisy was bad.
- The Israelites believed that the temple was secure from destruction because of its holiness was not true.
- God would destroy Israelites/Jerusalem through invasion of a foreign nation.

- If the people stopped their evil ways, God would not bring judgement upon them.
- God would destroy the temple of Jerusalem and send the people to exile.

Q7. What forms of punishment did Jeremiah prophesy that God would use on Judah?

- The punishment would be in form of a foreign body that God use to conquer Judah.
- They would be attacked and their city destroyed.
- People would suffer and die due to their sins.
- The punishment would in form of drought. This would affect people and animals.
- God's punishment would come through death, diseases and sword.
- Their punishment would be a defeat inflicted to them by Babylonian.
- The punishment would be the loss of their land to a foreign nation and their enslavement.
- God would allow the enemy to destroy Jerusalem and take survivors to captivity.

Q8. Outline the content of Jeremiah's letter to exiles in Babylon (Jer. 29)

- He encouraged the Israelites in Babylon to build houses and live in them.
- Plant gardens and eat their produce.
- Marry and increase.
- Pray for their rulers.
- Not to worship false gods.
- Not to be cheated by false prophets.
- To obey their masters.
- Worship one God.

Q9. Explain four symbolic acts related to judgement and punishment as demonstrated by Prophet Jeremiah

- Linen waist cloth – the rotten/useless linen cloth that had been hidden in the caves and left to rot stood for Israel's state of being useless before the eyes of God. A sign that they had soiled their priesthood.
- Jeremiah was asked not to marry the solitary life symbolized solitude in exile.
- Two baskets of fig fruits – the bad fruits signified that the bad people would be punished.
- Wooden yoke – he was asked to carry a wooden yoke and work around with it signifying suffering in Babylon – exile.
- Breaking an earthly flask – destruction of the temple.
- Visit to a potter – whereby the potter destroyed a pot due to poor shape and remolded it. God would remold Israel to a shape befitting them.
- Not to comfort anybody – these would be sorrow and suffering, no help while in exile.

Q10. Identify the relevance of Jeremiah's teaching to Christians life today

- Christians are called to preach God's gospel as Jeremiah did.
- Christians should accept suffering like Jeremiah did.
- They should learn to distinguish between false and true prophets.
- Like Jeremiah, they should condemn evil in society.
- They have a duty to call people to repentance as Jeremiah did.
- Christians should be good examples to the people by living, holy and upright lives as Jeremiah did.
- People should be able to know the nature of God through the lives of Christians.
- They should believe they are the new community as prophesied by Jeremiah in the new covenant.

Q11. In what ways is the prophetic mission of Jeremiah similar to that of Jesus?

- Both were rejected by their own relatives and communities.
- Both experienced opposition from political and religious authorities.
- Both prophesied the destruction of the temple.
- Both lamented over the stubbornness of the people of Jerusalem.
- Both predicted divine judgement and punishment in Israel.

Jeremiah predicted the new covenant that is fulfilled by Jesus.

Prophet Nehemiah

Qn 1. Describe the political background of Nehemiah

- He worked during the Babylonian exile which lasted between 589- 538 BC
- During his vacation, Israelites were oppressed politically
- The Israelites hoped that God would soon liberate them from this bondage
- In 538 BC the Babylonians were conquered by Cyrus the great king of Persia
- In 538 BC king Cyrus allowed Israelites to return to Judah
- King Cyrus gave the Israelites a decree to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem
- In 538BC the first exile under Zebu Babel
- Joshua the priest departed from Babylon and started to rebuild alters of God
- Under the guidance of prophets Haggai and Zachariah the temple was rebuilt and dedicated
- The second exile arrived under prophet Ezra; after king Artaxerxes authorized Ezra to re establish Israelites religious and moral expectations of the Mosaic Law.
- Nehemiah was a servant the king Artaxerxes palace. The king authorized him to go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem
- Amidst all opposition from Samaritan, Nehemiah accomplished the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem in 52 days. He then dedicated the walls to God.

This restored the sense of political pride in Israel. However the Israelites remained subjected to the Persians and continued to pay tribute. The Persians were later overthrown by Romans who ruled the entire region until the time of the birth of Jesus

Qn 2. Describe the social background to the vocation of Nehemiah

- Israelites men married foreign women
- Children spoke different languages from their mothers
- Hebrew language almost became extinct
- Nehemiah condemned mixed marriages and even banned them
- Exiles who returned home were humiliated by foreigners who partially occupied their land
- The Samaritans threatened Nehemiah's life as he rebuilt walls of Jerusalem
- Rich Jews oppressed the poor e.g. they would confiscate their property for failure to repay debts

Qn 3. Describe the religious background to the vocation of Nehemiah

- While in exile the Babylonians allowed the Jews to continue with their religious lives
- The exiles became the period of purification
- They returned with a new zeal to worship God; they rebuilt the altar under Zerubbabel for offering burnt offerings to God
- The returnees built the temple of Jerusalem under Haggai and Zachariah and dedicated to God by Ezra
- Nehemiah embarked on rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem amidst opposition in 52 days the wall was complete. Consequently, Jerusalem once more became the centre of worship for Israel. Idolatry was not allowed again in Israel after the exile.
- The temple of Jerusalem was dedicated to Yahweh. The Israelites renewed their covenant with God under prophet and priest Ezra. Nehemiah carried out various religious reforms

Qn 4. Describe occasions when Nehemiah prayed

- When he heard about the suffering of his fellow Jews back in Judah

- When he learned about the state of ruin of Jerusalem and king Atarterxes to request him to allow him go back to Judah
- When his enemies e.g. Tobiah and Samballat ridiculed him as he reconstructed the walls of Jerusalem
- When he learned of his enemies conspiracy to attack Jerusalem
- When his enemies conspired to destroy his life/ kill him
- When Shemiah attempted to frighten him to hide in the temple as hi life was in danger
- When he cleansed and arranged the temple as a house of God
- When he warned the people of Judah against violating the Sabbath law
- After chasing away the son in law of Samballat from the temple
- After cleansing the Israelites of foreign influence

Qn 5. State occasions when Christians pray

- When they are faced with diverse persecutions. They ask God to protect them
- When they don't understand certain scriptures. They ask God to give them revelation
- When they are faced with certain difficulties of life. They ask God to help them
- When the nation is facing political crisis. They pray for peace
- When they feel inadequate and sinful. They ask God to perform certain miracles for them e.g. healing

Qn 6. What is the importance of prayer in Christian life?

- Prayer helps Christians to praise God, give thanks to him and to repent
- It helps Christians to pour out their hearts to God
- It helps Christians to rely to God for emotional and mental stability. It helps put our problems to God
- It strengthens Christians. It gives them determination and character to remain steadfast in their responsibilities despite the challenges
- Through prayer a Christian can request to stand against personal attacks and temptations
- Prayer is the source of courage and strength in times of tribulations

It brings one closer to God, we use it to praise God, use it to ask for God's supply of their needs, used to ask for forgiveness and promotes important virtues e.g. persistence and patience and promotes unity among different communities

Qn 6. Identify the leadership of Nehemiah's patriotism

He was a true patriot i.e. after talking to the Jews and getting the news of distribution of Jerusalem, he was forced to go back home.

Reliance to God. He totally relied on God and to his call i.e. in most cases he prayed before carrying out an activity

Devoted/ talented. As a cupbearer to the emperor he was an educated, talented and trustworthy young man

Visionary. He had a vision and he shared it with enthusiasm to inspire Jerusalem leaders to rebuild the wall

Initiative.

He took the initiative to persuade the emperor to put things right

Excellent organizer. He carefully organized the rebuilding process. He organized how the wall of Jerusalem was to be built in steps

Careful planner. He carefully examined and inspected the wall before starting the work

People's representative. He was a proper representative of his people in Israel. He had a sense of responsibility to his community

Shrewd. He avoided the meetings organized by his opposer and overlooked the abuses placed on him

Impartial. He appointed men of integrity and God fearing to keep guard over Jerusalem

Selfless and kind. He had the skill of solving problems. He hence cancelled all debts that people had

Homogenous. He employed different strategies to counteract his opposer

Qn7. explain the relevance of Nehemiah's leadership to a Christian today

A Christian should use his/her present position to serve God

Christians should acknowledge God as their source of power and giver of gifts

- A leader should appoint people who are trustworthy and honest to help him/ her in ruling the country
- God answers our prayers as a result of asking others for help
- A Christian leader should keep his /her plans a secret until it matures to make an announcement
- Christians should share their visions with others the way Nehemiah did
- Leaders should take care of the needy in the society
- As a Christian one could be lured to temptations; the way Nehemiah was opposed we should be ready to resist temptations
- Christians should be ready to help in solving problems in the society Christians should act as role models by carrying out spiritual activities with the truth and helping in work after starting projects.

Qn 8. Explain the relevance of Nehemiah's experience to Christians

- They should not exploit the needy and disadvantaged
- They should defend the rights of the weak and use their work place, family and friends
- They should ask God to protect them from the mischief of their enemies
- That they should pray to God to give them guidance in their endeavors
- That they should persevere in all difficulties as Nehemiah did
- They should condemn the injustices in the society
- They should know that leadership involves challenges and difficulties
- They should be practically involved in problem solving e.g. HIV/AIDs scourge

Qn 9. Explain the problems that Nehemiah encountered in his vocation

- Oppression of the poor Jews by the rich Jews e.g. demanded high interests on borrowed money
- Great opposition from the enemies they tried to frustrate his/her efforts to build the walls of Jerusalem
- Threat to his own life. His adversaries wanted to kill him
- Lack of co-operation and support from the Jews. They refused to work with him on the wall project

- Excessive foreign influence in Israel. Intermarriage brought about foreign influence which threatened to extinct the Jew culture and language
- Violation of the Sabbath laws. Israelites went on to do their daily chores on the Sabbath day
- Abuse of the temple. Eliaship housed Tobias the heathen and God's enemies
- Misuse of offerings. The levies were denied their share of sacrificial offerings as required by the law

Qn 10. Describe the steps taken by Nehemiah to renew the covenant

- Ezra the priest read the book of the covenant and explained the meaning of the Law of Moses. The Israelites listened carefully and their lives changed. They responded Amen, amen
- Celebration of the feast of shelters. After reading the scriptures, they realized that they had not been celebrating the feast of shelters. This was to remember their deliverance from Egypt. They were also to think about God's protection and guidance
- The Israelites confessed of their sins as they learnt that they had not been following God's commandments. Nehemiah was devoted to confession of national sin and prayers to God's grace
- Recital of God's dealings with Israel. They recital of God's mighty acts is done in this. They remembered their history and this renewed God's grace and power in them
- A renewed covenant sealed. The covenant was renewed in writing and the leaders put seals
- The binding agreement that people and God was done by the Israelites joining hands

Qn 11. State the promises that Israelites made during the renewal of the covenant

- That every seventh year, they would cancel debts according to the Mosaic Laws
- That they should observe God's commandments and live according to his laws
- That they would offer the first of their harvests as required by Torah
- That they would dedicate their first-born sons to God
- That they will not intermarry with foreigners at all
- That they will not buy corn or anything else on the Sabbath day
- That they will remit their arrival temple expenses to ensure that God's house was okay
- That they will provide sacrifices and offerings at the temple

- That they will pay their tithes according to the law

Group study activities

1. Read and study the book of Luke by
2. Dividing up the chapters in the book of Luke among the members of the class and let every group present a summary of the chapters allocated to them.
3. Check out movies about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ but note that your study according to the syllabus is based on St. Luke's gospel.