

MASENO SCHOOL

CRE DEPARTMENT

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

FORM THREE NOTES

TEACHER'S NAME

JESUS TEACHING ON THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he told his disciples to go to Jerusalem and wait the Holy Spirit.

During his ministry he told his disciples the role of the Holy Spirit which was as follows;

- 1) The Holy Spirit would complete God's universal plan of saving mankind from sin (salvation).
- 2) The Holy Spirit would work as advocate, counselor and comforter to those who love Jesus and obey his commandments.
- 3) He would reveal the truth about God e.g. he would help the disciples to understand mysterious things like Holy Trinity.
- 4) He would remind and introduce the disciples to the deeper meanings of Jesus words and teachings.
- 5) The Holy Spirit would reveal the sins of the world and pronounce Judgment on the sinners
- 6) He would help the disciples to understand Jesus' relationship with God the father.
- 7) He would affirm the right of Jesus as the son of God.
- 8) It would reveal the glory of Jesus death as victory over the Satan (Prince of evil)
- 9) He would continue with Jesus' works of forgiving sins.
- 10) He would give the disciples power to become his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judah and the rest of the world.
- 11) He would enable the disciples to discern and expose the secrets of sinful people.

The role of the Holy Spirit in the church today

- (i) The Holy Spirit enables Christians to make the right decisions/ gives wisdom counsels
- (ii) He gives believers deep understanding/revelation of God/His purposes for them
- (iii) He helps individuals to know who Jesus Christ is/aspire to live Christ-like lives
- (iv) He strengthens the faith of Christians
- (v) He gives them power to perform miracles/healing
- (vi) He enables Christians to speak in tongues/interpret tongues
- (vii) The Holy Spirit enables Christians to prophesy/preach the word of God/ growth of the church
- (viii) He enables believers to distinguish/differentiate between spirits
- (ix) The Holy Spirit enables believers to do works of mercy/kindness/charity
- (x) The Holy Spirit convicts people of their sins/leads them to confess/repent

(xi) He unites believers as one body of Christ

(xii) The Holy Spirit enables Christians to worship God/pray/sing

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

During the day of Pentecost, the disciples receive the gifts which were a fulfillment of the promise made by Jesus to the disciples.

How the Holy Spirit manifested on the day of Pentecost. (Acts. 2: 1 – 11)

The disciples gathered in a room where they were praying. Suddenly a sound came from Heaven like a rush of mighty wind and filled the house. Tongues of fire rested upon the disciples. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and started speaking in different languages. The crowd wondered what was happening and thought that the disciples were drunk. Peter became courageous and told the crowd what was happening.

Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost.

After the apostles were accused of being drunk, Peter took his leadership role and explained what was happening. He told the people that the disciples were not drunk; they were filled with the Holy Spirit as a fulfillment of Joel prophet.

The out pouring of the house was a positive proof that Jesus' ministry was messianic era. He told them the following concerning Jesus;

- I) Jesus was the son of God.
- II) Jesus had been given power to perform miracles and wonders.
- III) Jesus was innocently killed by the Jews.
- IV) God had raised him
- V) Jesus ascended to heaven and rested at the right hand of God.
- VI) He was
- VII) He has been made
- VIII) David foresaw his resurrection
- IX) He was a Nazzarite
- X) His death and suffering was as God's plan.
- XI) **NB** After Peter's message, the crowd asked him what they would do in order to receive Holy Spirits. He told them to repent their sins and be baptized. Those who repented were baptized and about 3,000 people received Christ on that day.

The events that took place on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-40)

- On the day of Pentecost, the disciples of Jesus were locked in a room for fear of being attacked by the Jews.
- A sound came from heaven like a mighty wind which filled the house.
- There appeared tongues of fire which rested on each of them.
- The apostles were all filled with the holy spirit
- They started talking in tongues
- The crowd which was outside were amazed/ wondered what had happened to the disciples
- The crowd mocked the disciples of being drunk

- Peter defended the disciples/ explained the meaning of the event
- Peter preached to the crowd about the ministry of Jesus.

How the life of Peter was transformed during the day of Pentecost

- ✓ peter was filled with the holy spirit
- ✓ he started speaking in tongues
- ✓ he became courageous/ defended the disciples that they were not drunk
- ✓ he was able remember old testament prophecies/ teachings
- ✓ he became the witness of the work, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- ✓ he called people to repent
- ✓ he was empowered to perform miracles
- ✓ he baptized believers
- ✓ he gained wisdom/ advised the disciples on what to do
- ✓ he preached the word of God

The qualities of Peter revealed on the day of Pentecost.

- I) Courageous / Brave – He was able to tell the crowd what was happening
- II) Responsible – He took his role and explained to the ground what was happening
- III) Honest – He honestly told the crowd what to do to receive Holy Spirit.
- IV) Intelligent / knowledgeable - He was able to tell the crowd the characteristics of Jesus and how to receive the Holy Spirit.

Lessons Christians learn from outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

- I) It is important for them to meet together in fellowships the way the disciples met together.
- II) They should be obedient to God the way the disciples obeyed Jesus' instructions.
- III) They learn that the Holy Spirit empowers people to preach God's message to people the way he empowered Peter.
- IV) They should have courage and take up responsibility whenever they are given the way Peter did.
- V) They learnt the baptism of Holy Spirit is important for them receive salvation.
- VI) Jesus keeps his promises e.g. the promises of the Holy Spirit to the disciples.
- VII) There is a need for them to repent so as to receive the Holy Spirit.

Paul's teaching on the Holy Spirit (1st Cr. 12)

Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

- 1) Wisdom
- 2) Knowledge
- 3) Healing
- 4) Speaking in tongue
- 5) Interpretation of tongues
- 6) Prophecy / preaching
- 7) Faith
- 8) Performing Miracles

9) Distinguishing tongues

Gifts of Holy Spirit.

- 1) Wisdom – Ability to make wise judgments or decisions
It enables Christians to make wise decisions.
- 2) Knowledge – Is the ability to understand God and all about his kingdom.
It enables Christians to understand the nature of God and his willing.
- 3) Healing – it enables Christians to lead people to receive healing from all kinds of illness.
- 4) Speaking in tongues - refers to ability to speak in another language that hasn't been learnt.
- 5) Interpretation of tongues – Ability to explain the meaning that's found from the languages of those who speak in tongues.
- 6) Prophecy – Ability to predict future happenings.
- 7) Faith – Ability to retrieve and have confidence in God power to perform certain things.
- 8) Performing miracles – Ability to do extra-ordinary things that are beyond human power.
- 9) Distinguishing spirits – Ability to distinguish false spirit from true spirit.

Paul's teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

- 1) All gifts come from the same spirit and are therefore important
- 2) Spiritual gifts are given to different people for God's service.
- 3) Just as human body has many organs which play a different role so does the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- 4) All the gifts of the Holy Spirit are to be demonstrated with love.
- 5) Even if one speaks in tongues without love, it becomes nothing but meaningless noise.
- 6) All the gifts of Holy Spirit are temporary but fruit for love last forever.
- 7) He advised those with the gifts of speaking in tongues to pray for the power of interpretation.
- 8) He advised that in a meeting, not more than two people should speak in tongues.
- 9) If there is no interpreter, a person with gift of tongues should refrain from speaking to the congregation.
- 10) On prophecy, he advised that only two or three prophets should speak as others listen.
- 11) He advised that everything was to be done decently and in orderly manner during worshiping.

Criteria for decreeing the gifts of the Holy Spirit

- St. Paul gave guidelines on how one would be able to discern the spiritual gifts;
- I) A person under influence of true spirit should be able to recognize Jesus as Lord and Savior.
 - II) A person with true spirit would be known by his fruits / his way of life.
 - III) A person with true gifts always conforms to the teachings of Jesus Christ.
 - IV) A person with the gifts will always use the gift for the benefit of the church and not for material gain.
 - V) A person with a true spirit produces the fruits of the Holy Spirit e.g. love, joy, generosity e.t.c.

Saint Paul 's teaching on how the gifts of the Holy Spirit should be used in the church.

- (i) The gifts of the Holy Spirit should be used for the common good of all.
- (ii) They should be used to strengthen / encourage / comfort members.
- (iii) They should be used to bring unity / not to discriminate / divide members.
- (iv) There is need to respect / appreciate all the gifts.
- (v) They should be used in an orderly way / no confusion.
- (vi) The gifts should be used in love.
- (vii) The gift of speaking in tongues should be minimised in public worship.
- (viii) There is need to have interpretation of tongues for them to be meaningful / helpful.
- (ix) Prophecies should be carefully evaluated / weighted.

Manifestation of Gifts of the Holy Spirit in churches today.

Spiritual gifts are still useful in churches today; they manifest themselves in churches in the following way;

- I) Those with the gift of prophecy have been able to prophesy about the future of individuals in the church, the nations and world at large.
- II) Gifts of wisdom are revealed in the church where people are able to make wise decisions e.g. in electing church leaders.
- III) Gift of discerning spirit manifest in the church where believers are able to recognize and rebuke people who come in church with evil intention of disrupting the church.
- IV) Gift of healing are revealed where some people have been prayed for and receive healing from various diseases.
- V) Gifts of faith help Christians to withstand challenges of life and belief in God's promises.
- VI) Gifts of performing miracles are revealed where people pray and sick received healing miracles.
- VII) Gift of speaking in tongues is used mostly in spirits filled churches e.g. P.A.G, African Devine Churches e.t.c. it enable believers to communicate intimately with God.
- VIII) Gifts of knowledge are shown in the way priest understand or interprets God's message by making it relevant to life situation.
- IX) Gifts of interpreting spirits are known where those with gifts interpret different tongues.

Reasons why the use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit brought disunity in the Church at Corinthians:(How gifts of the Holy Spirit was misused in early Church)

- (i) There was competition in speaking in tongues.
- (ii) There was disorder /confusion in worship as people with different gifts tried to outdo one another.
- (iii) People did not use their gifts for the benefit of the Church/one another.
- (iv) Some gifts such as prophecy/teaching were looked down upon/there was pride/ boasting .
- (v) There was no interpretation of tongues when the gift of speaking in tongues was in use, hence messages were not understood.
- (vi) People did not show love for one another .
- (vii) Those with the gift of speaking in tongues despised those who did not have some members thought they were too spiritual.

How the gifts of the Holy Spirit have been abused/ misused in churches today.

- I) Those who speak in tongues feel superior to others and undermine those who don't have.
- II) Some people claim to have spiritual gifts yet they lack love to others.
- III) Those with gifts of prophecy, sometimes used it for personal gain and not for the benefit of church.
- IV) Some people pretend to have the gift of speaking in tongues
- V) Gifts of prophecy have been abused where some people give false prophecies that never come to pass.

Fruits of the Holy Spirit (gal. 5: 16 – 26)

Fruits refer to actions or virtues of the Holy Spirit that must be seen.
There are nine main fruits of the Holy Spirit.

- I) Love
- II) Joy
- III) Peace
- IV) Kindness
- V) Goodness
- VI) Faithfulness
- VII) Gentleness
- VIII) Self-control
- IX) Patience

1. Love – is having a deep feeling and affection towards others by helping them.
2. Joy – Is a state of being happy with one self and others. Christians must spread and share joyful moments with others
3. Peace - is the state of living in harmony with others.
Christians should also act as peace –maker where there is disagreement.
4. Patience – is the ability to endure as you wait for something.

- Christians should develop the quality of waiting without losing hope.
5. Is the act of striving to benefit all people who interact with you?
Christians should be of benefit to others by doing well to them.
 6. Self-control – being disciplined and to do what is right.
Christians must exhibit self discipline as members of Christian's community.
 7. Faithfulness – is having trust in something or somebody.
 8. **Gentleness** – Doing things in a quiet and careful way. Christians should be keen when handling in tax given.
 9. Kindness- Ability to show concern for those in need by helping them

True love contains the following virtues.

Paul's teaching.

- i) Love is patient
- (ii) Love is kind
- (iii) Love is not jealous/not envious
- (iv) Love is not boastful/proud
- (v) Love is not rude/not arrogant
- (vi) It does not insist on its own way/not self seeking
- (vii) It is not irritable/resentful/not easily angered
- (viii) It does not keep a record of wrongs/it does not rejoice at the wrong
- (ix) It rejoices at the right/the truth
- (X) It hopes all things
- (Xi) It endures/perseveres all things
- (xii) It believes/trusts all things
- (xiii) It never ends
- (xiv) It is the greatest gift
- (Xv) It bears all things.

How Kindness as a fruit of the Holy Spirit is abused in the Church in Kenya today as follows.

- v Embezzlement of funds for projects.
- v Some church leaders have become greedy people.
- v Some needy people have taken advantage of the kindness in the church.
- v Some church leaders have become very extravagant.
- v Some church leaders have used the church money in immoral activities.
- v Some Christians take advantage of other Christians in the church.
- v It has led to misuse of gifts and offering.
- v Some Christians fail to work because they expect assistance from others.
- v When church leaders demand for payment for all services they render.
- v When church leaders ask their congregations to cater for their personal needs like further studies/buying of vehicles.

Reasons why Christians find it difficult to help the needy in Kenya today are as follows:

- v Lack of what to share or inadequacy of resources;
- v Tribal/ethnic feelings may hinder one from giving assistance to the need;
- v Political leaning/affiliations influence Christians against helping those who do not belong to their camp;
- v Denominational differences where some Christians are not ready to share with those who do not belong to their group;
- v Indifferences of some Christians to the plight of the needy;
- v Poor communication/infrastructure in some parts of the country that make impossible to reach the needy;
- v Misappropriation of resources meant for assisting the needy discourages Christians from contributing;
- v It is difficult to identify the genuine needy cases; or
- v There are too many needy cases.

UNITY OF BELIEVERS

Unity of believers refers to the oneness of those who have faith in Jesus Christ as their savior.

Factors that promote national unity in Kenya

- The constitution. This is a set of rules agreed upon by a group of people who have chosen to live together. ...
- Education. ...
- One government. ...
- The presidency. ...
- National language. ...
- National anthem
- National activities. ...
- Religion and religious practices

The early Christians lived in unity which was demonstrated in the following ways.

- They prayed together
- They shared their meals
- They shared their property
- They met together to receive apostolic
- They celebrated the lords supper

The concept of the unity of believers as illustrated in the New Testament

The terms used to refer to unity of believers in New Testament

- The people of God
- The body of Christ
- The vine and the branches
- The church
- The bride

a) People of God (1peter 2:9-10)

Peter mentioned the following on people of God:

- The believers are chosen people/race/they have been selected.
- They are a royal priesthood/they are to save the greatest King/God.
- They are Holy nation/expected to lead holy/righteousness lives
- They belong to God/they form a family of God's own possession.
- They are to declare wonderful deeds of God/that is to lead a life of worshipping God/testifying about God.
- They were called from darkness to light/their lives had been transformed and should not be dominated by evil.
- They were once not a people/they were outside the covenant way of life.
- They are led by the mercies of God/have received God's grace.

b) The body of Christ 1 Cor 12:12-27, Eph 4:1-12)

Paul uses the analogy of human body to demonstrate the unity of believers

- Christians form many parts of the body Christ, each with different functions to perform just as the human body does.
- The believers are the body of the Christ in which everyone should work for the total well being of the church.
- Through baptism, believers become members of one body of Christ.
- Christians share the same rights and privileges as members of one body in Christ.
- Christians should remain united as they deliver different services to the community.
- Paul encourages Christians to have humility gentleness and patience in order to promote unity among them.
- The different gifts should be used to enrich the church and to glorify God.
- Christians share the same rights and privileges as members of one body of Christ
- Christians should not only be concerned with their own welfare but also consider that of others

c) The vine and the branches

The Jesus uses the metaphor of the vine to teach about the believers union with God

- i.* God is the vine dresser / Jesus is the vine.
- ii.* The followers of Christ / Christians are the branches.
- iii.* The unfaithful Christians are the unfruitful branches which are cut away / destroyed.
- iv.* Christians are related to God through Jesus Christ.
- v.* The faithful Christians / fruitful branches are pruned so as to produce more fruit.
- vi.* For Christians to continue bearing fruit / doing good stuff they must remain united to Christ.
- vii.* Through Jesus Christ, all Christians are joined to one another.
- viii.* Christians should rely on God for all providence.
- ix.* Love is passed on to Christians from God through Jesus.
- x.* Christians should keep / observe God's commandments.

d) The church (Ephesians 5: 21 – 32)

Paul illustrates the unity of the church using divine marital relationship

- Here, the church is compared to the relationship between husband and wife. St. Paul taught the following on the similarities about the church to husband-wife relationship;
 - ✓ Members of the church learn to live in harmony/ unity just like husband and wife
 - ✓ There is a chain of authority in marriage where the head of the family is the husband just the same way Christ is the head of the church
 - ✓ Just the same way Christ loves the church, husbands should love their wives

- ✓ The union between husband and wife is meant to last forever so Christians are called upon to maintain a steadfast faithfulness till the eternity
- ✓ Christians are called upon to submit to Christ just the same way a wife submits to her husband
- ✓ Christians are supposed to be united/ cling on Christ just the same way husband and a wife becomes flesh
- ✓ Just as Christ cherishes the church, husbands should care for their wives

e) The bride

- Bride is a woman who is going to marry, or who has just been married
- Bridegroom is a man on his wedding day, just before it or a short time after it
- The unity of believers is expressed in the concept of bride in the following ways;
 - ✓ Christians are the bride while Christ is the bridegroom
 - ✓ The relationship between believers is the same as that of bride and the bridegroom
 - ✓ Believers are united to Christ like the groom and the bride who unite to become one
 - ✓ Jesus died on the cross as a way of paying the bride price
 - ✓ Christians who are the bride should make themselves pure as they wait for the groom/ the Christ
 - ✓ Love that exist between the bride and bridegroom symbolizes the love of Christ for the church
 - ✓ God will take the community of believers to the holy city where they would live forever/ Christians who are committed to god would be taken to heaven just the same way a bride is taken to a new home
 - ✓ Christians should be faithful to Christ as bride is faithful to bridegroom
 - ✓ Jesus was a God sent bridegroom to bring salvation
 - ✓ The church is committed to Christ just as the bride is committed to the bridegroom

Ways in which unity is maintained among Christians today

- By reading the Bible
- Christians visit the bereaved families and offer material support, prayers e.t.c.
- Unity is experienced when Christians gather to help the needy
- When members of the church pray together
- When members of the church visit the needy orphans and sick people
- Interdenominational prayers are held at the central place for the nation
- Christians invites disadvantaged members to their gatherings

What were the causes of Disunity in the Early church?

- (i) **Dispute over Church leadership:** Disputes arose on who was the leader of the church amongst Paul, Peter and Apollos.
- (ii) **Eating meat offered to idols:** Believers who were strong in faith ate food offered to idols arguing that the idols were powerless. The weak believers argued that these meals defiled those who ate it.
- (iii) **Misuse of Spiritual gifts:** Christians boasted over the gift of speaking in tongues as being important than others.
- (iv) **Sexual immorality:** Christians in Corinth had become more immoral than non-Christians even to the extent of committing incest,
- (v) **Marriage :** Some believers avoided marriage because they expected the second coming of Jesus soon,
- (vi) **Abuse of Lord's supper :** The original meaning of the Lord's Supper had been despised. The Christians grouped themselves according to their status in the society. The rich ate and drank while the poor watched embarrassed.
- (vii) **Misunderstanding of the Resurrection of the body:** Some-Christians believed in the resurrection of the body after death while others doubted it
- (viii) **Covering of the head during worship:** Some women had discarded the traditional way of covering their heads during worship while others maintained it.

Causes of disunity in church today

- The formation of splinter groups
- Misuse of church funds by management
- Sexual immorality in the church
- Church's failure to satisfy the spiritual needs of the members
- Differences in practice of baptism
- Different beliefs about the resurrection
- Appointment of women as church leaders
- Tribalism and other forms of discrimination in the church
- False pastors who are after money
- The misunderstanding of the use of spiritual gifts

ELECTED OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS AND THEIR TEACHINGS

PROPHET: is a person who foretells events as revealed to him by God

PROPHECY: IS the statement made to indicate that something will take place

Other names used to refer to prophets

- ✓ Servants of God

- ✓ Messenger of God
- ✓ Man of God
- ✓ Shepherds of God
- ✓ Watchmen of God's word
- ✓ A teacher
- ✓ Mediator
- ✓ God's mouthpiece
- ✓ A seer

Categories of prophets

- True prophets
- False prophets

I. True prophets

Are prophets who have a personal relationship with God. They were commissioned by God and acted as intermediary between God and the people

CATEGORIES OF TRUE PROPHETS IN OLD TESTAMENT

- (i) Major prophets - their messages / books are elaborate / detailed
- (ii) Minor prophets - they have short / brief messages
- (iii) Canonical prophets - they are prophets whose utterances/prophesies are recorded in books that bear their names
- (iv) Non - canonical prophets - they are prophets whose oracles / messages have been compiled by other authors
- (v) Cultic / early prophets - they are prophets whose duties were associated with places of Worship

DUTIES OF A TRUE PROPHET

1. To foretell the future events especially those that affect the people of Israel
2. To pronounce god's judgement on the people

3. To call god's people to repentance
4. To speak on behalf of God
5. To strengthen and encourage the people on their suffering in order to give them hope

Characteristics of prophets

- 1) They were called by God/commissioned by God to be his servants
- 2) Were obedient to the call/ They responded to God's call in faith
- 3) They believed in Yahweh as their only God
- 4) They condemn social evils practiced by religious leaders e.g. king
- 5) They spoke, acted with authority and courage from God
- 6) They lived holy life
- 7) They communicated God's message to the people
- 8) They foretold future happenings which came to pass
- 9) They preached on the covenant way of life
- 10) They were prayerful and at times they would draw from people to seek God's revelation
- 11) They acted as mediators between God and the people
- 12) They faced opposition from the people and kings
- 13) They were given specific tasks to carry out.
- 14) They led exemplary lives / role models / prayerful / righteous
- 15) They pronounced God's punishment / judgement / restoration / hope.
- 16) They advocated for the covenant way of life

False prophets

- Were those who pretended to speak in the name of Yahweh but were not called by him.
- They challenged the work of true prophets and gave false messages to the people

CHARACTERISTICS OF FALSE prophets

- They were self-appointed / had no call from God
- They gave false hope to the people/ they raised false confidence among people
- They were always after pleasing the kings/ they wanted favors from kings
- They always tell lies as they were guided by God's spirit/ they spoke what people wanted to hear
- Their prophecies never come to be e.g. prophetess Hannah told the Israelites who had been exiled that they will go back to their land within two years ,but it never happened
- They were not guided by Yahweh but by their own wisdom

- They used their prophecy for material gain/ they asked for payments for their service
- They undermined the work of true prophets
- They were not ready to suffer for the truth
- Their lives were not exemplary / hypocrites
- They spoke about doctrines / teachings that were contrary to the covenant
- They did not speak with authority when challenged

The importance of prophets in Israel

- i. They communicated God's message to the people
- ii. They warned the Israelites of God's impending punishment/ judgement
- iii. They guided and counseled the people whenever they went wrong
- iv. They condemned evil practices done by the people e.g. bribery and corruption
- v. They foretold the future happenings or events especially those that affected the people e.g. wars, destructions of the city etc.
- vi. They revealed God's nature to the people e.g. God is loving and merciful
- vii. They gave people hope/ assurance of being restored to God if they repented their sins
- viii. They acted as priests
- ix. They advised political leaders in Israel
- x. They anointed kings
- xi. They contributed in the writing of message

Ways in which the Old Testament prophets received God's revelation

- a. Through dreams
- b. Through God's voice
- c. Through visions e.g. Amos
- d. Through familiar subjects as the branch of an Almond tree and basket of figs

How prophetic messages were written

- Some prophets dictated their messages to their disciples
- Some prophets wrote down the messages as they were revealed to them by God e.g. Isaiah (30;8)
- Some prophets had their personal scribes who wrote the messages on their behalf e.g. Jeremiah
- The disciples of early prophets preserved prophetic utterances and prophecies alongside many other accounts of events, rulers and matters of significance as oral tradition
- The prophetic messages were collected over time and organized into subjects by inspired writers or scribes who wrote them

- The inspired writers wrote the books in various literary forms e.g. poems , proverbs
- The words of the canonical prophets were in books which bear their names

How the OT prophets communicated God's message to people

- They used prose, narratives, Poems. Sermons and songs
- They used symbolic actions e.g. Jeremiah
- some wrote down the messages
- their life styles e.g. Jeremiah
- some performed miracles e.g. Moses

Similarities between the traditional African and true prophets in the Old Testament.

- (i) Both predicted future events / disasters which came to pass
- (ii) Both acted as mediators between God and the people.
- (iii) Both had supernatural powers to exercise their duties
- (iv) Both had a personal relationship with God / received revelations through visions / dreams
- (v) They were religious leaders who could offer sacrifices / prayers
- (vi) Both played an advisory role to the political leaders /acted as the conscience of the leaders
- (vii) Both urged their people to be morally upright / condemned evil in society
- (viii) They led exemplary lives / were role models.
- (ix) Both had prophets and prophetess

Differences

- old testament prophets communicated with God alone while traditional prophets communicated with God, ancestors and spirits
- old testament prophets faced opposition most of the time while traditional prophets were highly respected and obeyed
- old testament prophets were not diviners while some traditional prophets were diviners
- old testament prophets got messages from God while traditional prophets searched into the unknown to find the answers
- the messages from old testament prophets were recorded while messages from traditional African prophets were not recorded

- the old testament prophets taught about monotheism while traditional prophets preached about polytheism
- old testament prophets taught people on God's will while traditional prophets were concerned with prediction only
- old testament prophets were preachers who gave sermons while traditional prophets confined themselves to warning people about future events
- traditional African prophets were limited to a community while old testament prophets were universal
- old testament prophets did not take part in magical work while the traditional prophets involved themselves in magic

Similarities between the Old Testament prophets and nowadays priests /pastors

- they both condemned evil in the society
- they both provide social, religious and spiritual guidance to the people
- both communicated God's will to the people
- both warned people about impending dangers
- both called sinners to repent
- both give assurance of hope
- both faced opposition and rejection

Relevance of prophets to Christians today

- Christians should stand firm for the truth
- Christians should be ready to be messengers of God
- Christians should pass God's message to others without fear or favor
- Christians should condemn all evils in the society
- Christians should be role models and live exemplary lives
- Christians should pray for God' guidance
- Christians should not be confined to their communities but should reach out other communities for God is real
- Christians should expect opposition and suffering in their work of preaching the gospel
- Christians should be ready to obey God's prophetic call
- Christian should realize that God calls both men and women to his service
- Christians should provide hope for the people in times of suffering

PROPHET AMOS

Political background to the call of Amos

Amos prophesied during the reign of king Jeroboam (2) of Israel and king Uzziah of Judah. Though he was from Judah (southern kingdom), he was sent to prophesies in Northern kingdom (Israel). The reign of king Jeroboam was characterized with peace and stability. As a warrior, Jeroboam expanded the boundary of Israel and made the nation secure from attacks of the neighboring tribes

Social and economic background to the call of Amos

Due to political stability, Israel became a very prosperous nation economically. However the wealth of the nation was in the hands of few rich merchants. The gap between the rich and the poor was big. The rich lived luxurious life while the poor lived in poverty. The rich people started oppressing the poor. There was massive corruption in the society. Moral standards had gone down and most people practiced sexual immorality

Religious background

Although the people continued to worship Yahweh, there was cheating in worship. They were involved in social injustice and oppression of the poor. They also worshiped idols. They offered sacrifice to idols. They practiced temple prostitution. They were also practiced syncretism (worshiping God alongside other gods)

Historical background to call of Amos

He came from a village called Tekoa in Judah. He was a shepherd who owned many sheep and goats. He also used to grow sycamore trees. He was not a prophet but God called him to become a prophet when he was an adult.

The call of Amos (1:1, 3:8, 7:10-15)

He was called during the reign of Jeroboam 2 of Israel and Uzziah of Judah. He came from a village called Tekoa. His call came two years before earthquake. God called him through a vision. He received his call when looking after his flock in the wilderness. He felt a deep sense of compulsion to prophecy which he could not resist. He was called while in Judah his own home land to go and preach to the people in Israel. He obeyed God's call and went to Israel. Since he prophesied terrible things about Israel concerning judgement, he was not liked by the leaders. The high priest (Amaziah) ordered him to go back to Judah and prophecies there to earn a living. However Amos denounced this and said he did not earn a living from prophecy. Although he faced opposition, he never gave up as God's prophet.

Lessons Christian learn from the call of Amos

- God can call anyone to proclaim his word
- We should accept god's call in obedience and faith without excuses
- We should condemn evil practices in our society
- We should be ready to accept challenges or persecution
- Christian who serve the Lord should not give up

- Sinners will be punished by God just as Jeroboam and the people of Israel were punished
- Religious leaders should not practice hypocrisy as Amaziah did

The vision of Amos

Prophet Amos received five visions following his call. The visions were on prophecies concerning God's judgement for the sins of Israel

- Vision of locust
- Vision of great fire
- Vision of plumb line
- Vision of summer fruits
- Vision of destruction of the alter

1 Vision of locust (Amos 7:1-3)

Amos saw God sending a swarm of locust in the land of Israel. They were about to consume the crops after the king had taken his shares for tax purpose. This vision refers to the disaster which God was going to send to the people of Israel as a punishment for their sins. Amos pleaded with God to forgive the people and he forgave them

2vision of great fire (Amos 7:4-6)

God showed Amos a supper natural fire which was about to consume the land where the people were living in. This refers to total destruction that God was going to cause on the land through fire. Amos pleaded with God on behalf of people and God forgave people

3Vision of plumb line (Amos 7:7-9)

Amos saw a crooked wall being checked with a plumb line. The lord told Amos that he was setting a plumb line in the midst of the people of Israel. God had found their ways to be crooked like a crooked wall and he was therefore going to destroy them just the same way a crooked wall must be destroyed. All this time Amos did not intercede for the people because God's punishment was irreversible because the people had refused to repent their sins.

4The vision of basket of summer fruits (8:1-3)

Amos was shown a basket of ripe summer fruits at the end of the fruit harvest. This showed that the people of Israel were to be punished by God because their sins were many and God's judgment would not be delayed any more. Amos was silent and did not ask God to forgive them

5 vision of the destruction of altar (Amos9:1-4)

Amos saw lord standing beside the altar. God seemed to be commanding the angel to destroy the altar completely because it had become a Centre of evil activities. The destruction was total and nobody was to escape.

Lessons Christians learn from the visions of Amos

- Christians should accept corrections and repent to avoid God's punishment
- God forgive his people when they repent
- God punishes sinners
- God answers prayers/ listens to the pleas of his people
- Christians should obey God's word
- Christians should practice sincere worship/ avoid hypocrisy
- No one can escape God's punishment

Teachings of Amos

- 1) Social justice and responsibility
- 2) Hypocrisy
- 3) Judgment and punishment
- 4) Israel's election
- 5) The day of the lord
- 6) Remnant and restoration

1 Social justice and responsibility (Amos 2:6-8, 3:9-12, 4:1-3, 5:10-15, 6:1-8, 8:4-6)

- Social justice is dealing with other people fairly by showing concern for their needs.
- Responsibility is being accountable of our actions towards others.

God gave the people of Israel the laws to guide them in their relationship with him and others. However they failed to practice social justice in their dealings with others. Prophet Amos condemned them for the following injustice that they committed

a) Slavery (Amos2:6)

The rich people sold their fellow Israelites especially the poor who owed them debt to slavery as a way of paying debt. Amos condemned them for not observing the law of brotherhood which demanded them not to sell their brothers or sisters.

b) Sexual immorality and temple prostitution (Amos 2:7)

Sexual immorality was high such that a son and father would share the same prostitute in the temple of God. Sexual prostitution was form of idol worship which was against God's covenant. Amos therefore condemned them for practicing sexual immorality

c) **Idolatry (Amos5:26)**

Amos condemned the Israelites for breaking God's covenant by worshiping other gods e.g. kaiwan. They were offering sacrifice to the idols which was against God's commandment.

d) **Bribery and corruption (Amos5:7)**

The elders of Israel were in just because they took bribes and imposed heavy fines on the innocent people. The intimidated the poor and would or did not give them hearing in the law courts. The elders hated any righteous judge who condemned their injustice

d) **Breaking God's law on garments secured as pledges (Amos 2:8)**

God gave the Israelites the law restricting the garments that were given out to the creditor as a guarantee for the payment of goods borrowed, the garments were to be returned to the debtors before the sun set in the same day. Amos observed that the creditors failed to turn the garments as per the law instead they used them openly and shamelessly.

e) **Greed and excessive luxury (Amos 4:1-3)**

Amos condemned the rich and selfish women of Samaria for oppressing the poor. These women led luxurious life and were unkind to the poor. They made their husbands to exploit the poor so as to meet and maintain their luxuries life. As a result of this oppression Amos told the Israelites that God would punish them

f) **Dishonesty / cheating in business (Amos 8:4-6)**

Amos condemned the wealthy merchants who cheated the poor by using false scales in weighing goods. At times they would mix bad and good grains to sell to the poor. They also overcharged the poor when selling goods to them. They also charged high interest rate on wheat they sold to the poor. Amos told them that God will punish them for oppressing the poor and cheating in business

g) **Robbery with violence (Amos2:10)**

The rich acquired a lot of wealth through unfair means e.g. robbery with violence. They threatened the poor so as to give them what they wanted. Some were involved in actual violence so as to gate what they wanted. Amos warned them that God was going to punish them for acquiring wealth in unjust way

h) **Drunkenness (Amos 2:12)**

The people of Israel were involved in taking wine in the temple which they had taken from their debtors and forced those who were not suppose to drink such as Nazarites to drink. Amos condemned them and warn them of God's punishment because of this

i) False security (Amos 1:1-8)

Amos condemned the leaders who thought that they could not be punished because they were chosen people of God. They ate and relaxed on their couches thinking that all was well. Amos told them that God's punishment would come upon the city and Jerusalem would be destroyed including the people.

Ways in which the rich oppressed the poor during the time of prophet Amos

- The rich took the poor people's garment in pledge
- The poor were robbed of their food/gains / belongings
- Merchants overcharged the poor when selling them anything
- The poor were sold for a piece of silver/ a pair of shoes as they were considered useless
- The goods sold to the poor were unfit for human use/ consumption/ expired
- The poor were cheated in business deals as the rich used faulty scales/ measures
- The poor were sold into slavery when they were unable to pay their debts to the rich
- The poor denied justice in the law courts because they could not bribe the judges
- Cases taken to the court by the poor were thrown out/ not listened to

Reasons why Christians find it difficult to help the needy in Kenya today

- there are too many needy cases
- tribal/ ethnic feelings may hinder one from giving assistance to the needy
- political affiliations may influence Christians against helping those who do not belong to their side/ camp
- lack of what to share/ poverty/ inadequacy
- denominational differences where some Christians are not ready to share with those who do not belong to their group
- poor transport and communication systems in some parts of the country that make it impossible to reach the needy
- it is difficult to identify the genuine needy cases
- misappropriation of resources meant for assisting the needy discourages Christians from contributing

Ways in which the church is promoting social justice in Kenya today

- providing education to the public on social justice/ civic education
- by respecting the laws of the country as laid down by the government
- by helping the needy e.g. providing food, shelter, clothing

- preaching on social justice
- advising the government on the need to practice social justice
- condemning social injustices in the society
- by advocating for just laws
- they pray for justice to prevail in the land
- they lead exemplary lives/ role models
- by guiding and counselling the victims of injustice

Relevance of Amos teachings on social justice and responsibility to Christians

- I. They should condemn corruption in the society the way Amos did
- II. They should condemn sexual immorality in the society
- III. They should help the needy by sharing what they have with them
- IV. They should condemn business men who cheat in business
- V. They should acquire wealth in just way but not use force or violence
- VI. They should not indulge in sexual immoralities
- VII. They should not oppress the poor or enslave the poor
- VIII. They should not misuse the place of worship by carrying out evil practices

2 Amos teaching on hypocritical religion

Hypocrisy means pretending to be Godly and holy yet you are not

Amos condemned the people of Israel for cheating in their worshiping. They were concerned with outward religious observance yet they were not pure in their hearts. The following were some of the ways in which they cheated in worship

a) Insincere worship (Amos 5:4-15)

The people of Israel observed religious rites like fasting and paying tithes yet they had turned away from God by oppressing the poor. Others concentrated on outward appearance like noisy worship but lacked inner purity of their heart. Amos warned them against this and advised them to turn to God for them to live.

b) Empty sacrifices (Amos 4: 4 – 5)

Amos condemned sacrifices offered by Israelites at Bethel and Gilgal.

According to God these were empty sacrifices because he was interested in the inner purity of the heart which the Israelites were not observing.

Their sacrifices to God were: nothing.

c) Syncretism (Amos 8: 14)

Syncretism is the act of worshiping God alongside other gods. The Israelites interacted with their neighbors through trade and intermarriage and this brought about foreign gods in the Israel.

They started worshiping Yahweh alongside other gods.

d) Idolatry. (Amos 5: 26 – 27)

The Israelites abandoned the worship of one God and started worship idols in terms of images.

Amos warned them that those who swore by the idols of Samaritan would be taken to exile beyond Damascus as a form of punishment.

e) Temple prostitution

They claimed to worship Yahweh in the Jerusalem temple and at the same time they practiced prostitution in the same temple.

Reasons why prophet Amos condemned hypocritical religion in Israel

- The Israelites had neglected God's prophets
- Worshipped idol gods/ built high places for idol gods
- They defiled the place of worship
- They showed disrespect to the name of God through sexual immorality
- They had many ceremonial feasts and festivals
- They gave offerings and sacrifices to show off
- They were impatient during the worship ceremony because they wanted to go back to their businesses
- They practiced syncretism
- The worshippers were not righteous/ they mistreated their fellow Israelites which was against God's teaching
- They had no inner faith when worshiping

Factors that hinder Christians from practicing their faith

- Lack of role models
- Job commitment
- Social injustice
- Peer pressure
- False teachings/ different interpretation of the bible
- Greed for power/ wealth
- Science and technology
- Poverty/ unemployment
- Sickness/ill health
- Negative influence from mass media
- Ethnicity/ racism
- Gender bias
- Generation gap

Relevance of Amos teaching on Hypocrisy to Christians today.

- They should practice sincere worship by upholding Justice and righteousness
- They should condemn all forms of idolatry in the society today.
- They should learn that the inner purity of their heart is more important than the outward appearance of their worship.
- Their way of worship should be directly related to their way of life
- They should respect their places of worship and not to define it with immoral acts such as prostitution.
- They should worship only one God Yahweh who is their creator.
- They should listen to God's prophets to avoid punishment
- There is punishment for those who practice evils e.g. corruption, prostitution.
- They learn that obedience is better than sacrifices
- They learn that God is jealousy, God who does not entertain rivalry from idols.
- They should give tithes and offerings to god

Question.

KESC 2006 Give reasons why prophet Amos was against the way Israelites worshiped God.

Ans: all Amos teachings on hypocritical religion.

3) Amos teaching on punishment and Judgment on Israel and other Nations.

Judgment is the act of trying a case in a court of justice in order to find out the innocent and quality person.

According to prophecies teachings, judgment refers to God's punishment among his people Although Amos was commissioned to prophecy to the people of Israel, he pronounced God's punishment on Israel and her neighboring nations.

This showed that God is universal and punishes all the people so that they may change from their weaken behavior.

God's punishment on other nations.

I) The nation of Syria (Damascus) (Amos 1: 3 – 5)

The people of Syria had mistreated the pregnant women of Gilead during the war with Israel. Because of this crime God would send fire upon the land to destroy everything.

The people of Syria would be taken into the exile where they would serve as slaves.

II) Nation of Philistia (Gaza) (Amos 1: 6 – 8)

The people of Philistia (Gaza) had committed a crime of selling their fellow citizens in Edom as slaves to work in copper industry

God would punish them by sending fire upon the city walls to destroy their places.

III) The nation of Tyre (Phoenicia) Amos 1: 9 – 10)

The people of Tyre committed a crime of selling the Israelites to Edom as slaves hence breaking the covenant of brotherhood.

God would send fire upon the city walls of Tyre to destroy the whole land.

IV) The nation of Edom (Amos 1; 11 – 12)

The people of Edom were accused of being ruthless towards the Israelites.

They attacked the Israelites and killed most of them yet they were their relatives.

God was going to punish them by destroying the entire nation with the fire.

V) The nation of AMON (Amos 1: 13 – 15)

Like the case of Syria the people of Amon mistreated pregnant women of Gilead during the war with Israelites.

God would punish them by sending the fire upon the land and sending the king and his princes to exile.

VI) The nation of Moab (Amos 2: 1 – 3)

The people of Moab were accused of destroying the royal graves of the kings and burning their bones into ashes after defeating the Edommites during the war.

God would send the fire upon the nation of Moab.

He would also slay the king and his princes hence cutting off from the people.

God's punishment on Israel.

Forms of sins/evils committed by Israel

- They sin by selling their fellow Israel to slavery.
- They practice temple prostitution and sexuality.
- They practice Hypocrisy during worship
- They cheated in Bs by using false scales and over charging the poor.
- They practice syncretism
- They practice bribery and corruption.
- They lived a luxurious life especially the rich women of Samaria
- They oppressed the poor
- They worshiped idols e.g. Kaiwan and Sakkuth.

Forms of punishment/Judgment pronounced on Israel

1Invasion by a foreign nation (Amos 5: 16 – 17)

God was going to use the strong army of Syria to attack and destroy the land of Israel. During the attack many people would die such that there would be no professional mourners to wail

Attack by pestilence (Epidemic) (Amos 6: 9 – 10)

Few people who would escape the attack by Syria would be attacked by epidemic in which only one person would survive in a family.

Earthquake (Amos6: 11)

After the death of the people God would send earthquake to destroy the houses of the rich and the poor

Eclipse / Darkness (Amos 8: 9 – 10)

God would cause the darkness to cover the earth during the day so that the remaining people would not be able to see each other.

Famine for the word of God (Amos 8: 11 – 13)

Since Israel had rejected God's word sent to them through prophets, a time would come when God would withdraw his words from them.

Young men and women would faint on the way as they search for the word of God.

The word of God would be discussed like food during famine

Exile (Assyria)

The people of Israel who would survive several attacks by Syria would be taken to exile in Syria and Babylon where they would suffer as slaves.

N/B Although Amos pronounced judgment on the people of Israel he gave them a message of hope by inviting them to repent their sins.

He told them that God is merciful and would spare the remnants who will repent and turn back to him.

Many people would be killed during invasion by a foreign Nation.

How the church punishes errant members

- The church suspends them
- It denies them participation in the church activities/ rituals
- They may be denied leadership positions/ demoted/ withdrawal of privileges
- They may be publicly condemned/ asked to repent/ apologize
- They may be warned
- Some may be transferred to difficult areas
- They may be fired/ sacked from the job
- They may be excommunicated
- They may be charged a fine

Relevance on Amos teaching on Judgment and punishment to Christians.

- They learn that God is universal because he punished all the nations
- They learn that evil doers would be judged and eventually be destroyed.
- They should repent and seek for forgiveness when they commit sin in order to escape God's judgment.

- God is merciful because he forgives those who repent
- God hates sin and punishes those who commit sins.
- They should live holy lives and obey God's commandments for them to escape judgment.
- They learn that God is concerned about the welfare of his people and wants them to lead a morally upright life.
- God uses different ways to punish sinners.
- God is just

How the church punishes errant members.

- (i) The church suspends them.
- (ii) It denies them participation in church activities/rituals.
- (iii) They may be denied leadership positions/demoted.
- (iv) They may be publicly condemned/asked to repent/apologize.
- (v) They may be warned.
- (vi) Some may be transferred to difficult areas.
- (vii) They may be sacked from the job.
- (viii) They may be excommunicated.

(4) Israel's Election (Amos 2: 9 – 11) (Amos 3: 1 – 2)

Election is the act of choosing people for a purpose of leadership

Chosen nation – Israel was a chosen nation and God chose her in order to serve him.

Live according to covenant – As a chosen people, they were supposed to live according to the covenant way of life.

Recognize Yahweh – They were to recognize Yahweh alone as their God and keep his commandments

Live Holy life - They were to live holy lives because they were a nation of priests.

Not special privilege – Their election did not give them special privileges but special responsibility to serve God and others.

N/B; Israelites however miss understood the concept of election.

Election made them proud just because they were chosen nation.

They went astray and abandoned covenant way of life. They took it for granted that since they were God chosen people, he would not punish them regardless of their weaken ways

They were not better than other nation – Amos told them that God did not chose them because they better than other nation

Amos advised them to repent their sins and come back God so that they may be forgiven.

God can
Still choose
Another

- He told the God could have use any other nation for this purpose
- God can still choose another nation to serve him and reject them as his people

Punishment

- He told them that the fact that God has elected them does not exempt them From his judgment.
- God was going to punish them for their weaken just the way he would Punish other nations.

Teachings of prophet Amos on Israel's election

- Israel's election was out of God's own initiative/ favor for them
- God delivered the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt
- He led them during the exodus
- He protected them in the wilderness
- He defeated all their enemies
- God gave them a special land to inherit
- God raised prophets among them to lead them in their religious life
- God was to punish the Israelites because of their disobedience

Relevance of Amos teaching on election of Israel to Christian today.

- They learn that they are God chosen people / Nation.
- God chooses anyone to do his will
- The priests/ bishops/ church leaders are chosen by God
- They learn that it's God who chooses people to be Christian.
- They have a duty to spread the gospel to whole parts of the world because that is their responsibility
- They have a special responsibility of obeying God's commandment.
- They should be faithful /obedient to God.
- They will be punished by God if they go against his commands.
- They should always repent their sins for God to forgive them.
- They have been called by God to serve him in various capacities.
- They learn that God choose them to become Christian from many others.

Quiz

KCSE 2009 State the relevance of prophet Amos teaching on election of Israel to Christian in Kenya today (7 mks)

(5) Amos teaching on the day of the Lord (Amos 5: 18 – 20) (8: 7 – 13)

Israelites believed that “the day of the Lord” was the day God would make Israel Victorious against other nations.

They were confident that this was going to be a day when God would fulfill his covenant promises and crown them with glory and honor.

They believed it was a day when God would punish other nations and spare them.

The people of Israel anxiously looked forward for the day of the Lord.

Contrarily to their expectation, Amos declared that the day of the Lord would be a day of God’s judgment upon Israel for their evil ways.

- It would be a day of darkness but not light.
- It would be a day of terror and disaster
- On that day God would send earthquakes throughout the land that would make people tremble
- There would be mourning everywhere
- There will be darkness at noon
- Many people would die and the loss of life would be widely spread
- People would grieve and observe rites of mourning such as wearing sack clothes and shaving their head
- It would be a day of famine for the word of God and young men and women would faint in the process of searching for the word/people will thirst(hunger) for the word of god
- The feasts and festivals would turn into songs of mourning and lamentations/ not be joyful
- The people will be disappointed with the pain they will experience on that day.

Relevance of teachings of Amos on the day of the Lord to Christians today

- They should live a righteous life as they prepare for the second coming of Christ.
- They should repent their sins and turn away from evil in order to receive eternal life.
- They should prepare for the day of the Lord for no one knows the day and time the Christ will come.
- They learn that the day of the lord would be a day of judgment to the sinners.
- They should be ready to share with the needy as they prepare for the second coming of Christ.
- There is no joy/ celebration for sinners
- The wicked will not escape God’s judgement
- They learn that one day the world would come to an end.

Quiz

How do Christians prepare for the second coming of Christ?

Amos teaching on Remnant and Restoration

- Remnant refers to a small number of Israelites who survived the destruction of Israel by God/ the group that returned to Jerusalem from exile.
 - Restoration refers to reinstatement of the Nation of Israel into its original state
- Although Amos pronounced judgment on Israel due to her sins, he however felt that there were some hope for those who would sincerely repent and turn back to God
- He told the people of Israel that not all descendants of Jacob would perish but only sinners.
 - He told them that God would restore the dynasty of David after destruction
 - God would restore the people back to the land and they would rebuilt their ruin city
 - Their land would become very productive and they would harvest a lot from it.
 - After restoration the people of Israel would live in a peace and prosperity
 - God would never take the people into exile again after the restoration
 - The people would reunite as one nation and worship one God Yahweh after restoration.

Relevance of Amos teaching on remnant and restoration to Christians today.

- I. For Christians, the remnants are those who have turned to Christ through the grace of God.
- II. They are given hope that only un-repentant sinners would parish but the righteous would receive eternal life.
- III. They learn that God does not rejoice on the death of a sinner but would like them to repent and turn back to him.
- IV. They should lead morally upright life so that they can part of the God's remnant after judgment.
- V. They learn that God would restore his kingdom on earth after destroying the wicked.
- VI. They should repent their sins and ask forgiveness from God for them to be counted as remnants on the last day.
- VII. They learn that they are the remnants through whom God fulfills his promises in the world.
- VIII. God is the provider
- IX. God is loving and caring

Ways in which Christians can help the church leaders to perform their duties effectively

- Giving financial/ material help to them
- Advising/ counseling them on various issues
- Encouraging them in their work
- Participating fully in church activities/ functions
- Giving tithes and offerings faithfully
- Praying for them
- Respecting them
- Obeying the word of God
- Defending them against unfair accusations/ criticism
- Providing training opportunities for them

Quiz

KCSE 2009 Outline the teachings of prophet Amos on remnant and restoration of the Israelites.

General Quiz on the Quiz 4 pp1

- I. Describe the visions of Amos and explain their significance
- II. Give four similarities between traditional African and Old Testament prophets.
- III. What is the relevance of Old Testament prophets to Christians today?
- IV. Explain four ways in which prophetic messages were written in the Bible.
- V. Identify five categories of prophets in Old Testament.
- VI. What lessons do Christians learn from the religious messages of Amos?
- VII. What ways is prophecy practiced in the church today.
- VIII. State five ways in which prophets were important in the life of the Israelites
- IX. Give the difference between the traditional and Old Testament.

JEREMIAH

Political background to the call of Jeremiah

Jeremiah prophesied in the Southern Kingdom during the reigns of King Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoaiakim, Jehoiachim and Zedekiah who was the last king.

During his 40 years of prophetic ministry, the Babylonian army invaded Judah and destroyed the city, Jerusalem temple and walls of Jerusalem.

During the destruction of the city, King Zedekiah was captured and tortured and all his sons were killed in his presence.

Jeremiah was put in prison but after sometime, king Nebuchadnezzar ordered for his release.

The people of Judah were captured and taken to exile in Babylon.

Prophet Jeremiah requested those who remained to submit to the Babylonian rule.

After the fall of Jerusalem, King Zedekiah and his army officials were taken to exile to suffer as slaves.

After the destruction, Gedaliah was appointed as a governor of Judah but he was later on killed by Babylonian army.

The people who remained fled to Egypt, for fear of their life and Jeremiah accompanied them.

It is believed that Jeremiah might have died while in Egypt.

Social / Economic background

During Jeremiah's time, there were class distinction in Judah. The rulers and other rich officials lived a luxurious life. They emerged / got enough wealth and started exploiting the poor.

The kings forced the poor to provide labor in their farms and palaces.

The rich people acquired wealth dishonestly. The people of Judah practiced injustice and did not follow the covenant of brotherhood.

Religious Background.

Many times the Israelites failed in their moral obligation of living as per the covenant way of life. They had abandoned Yahweh and worshiped idols.

They were worshiping idols such as Baal, Ashera, and Mollech.

They dishonored Yahweh by practicing syncretism, human sacrifice believing in false prophecies and practicing Necromancy.

They married foreign wives who practiced human sacrifices.

King Josiah introduced religious reforms in Judah but the people continued to worship idols in private.

After the death of Josiah, the people went back into idolatry.

The priest and false prophets lied by giving prophecies that they created themselves.

Jeremiah however remained faithful and preached the covenant way of life.

Religious reforms made by King Josiah {Ecumenical reforms}

- He ordered the repair of the temple
- He led a national ceremony to renew the covenant faith
- He destroyed idols and altars associated to false worship
- He demolished high places and shrines used for Baalism
- He eliminated false prophets
- He cleansed the temple of Jerusalem of all idols
- He brought down all the houses that were used for prostitution
- He commanded the people of Israel to celebrate the Passover
- He removed all the priests who offered sacrifices to idols
- He drove out all the wizards and mediums from the temple

Jeremiah's personal life. (Jeremiah 1: 1 – 3)

He was born in a small village of Anathoth near Jerusalem. He was the son of Hilkiyah a priest in Anathoth. He was called by God to prophesy while he was still young.

He prophesied in the Southern Kingdom (Judah) for 40 years.

He had a personal scribe who recorded his prophecies and he was known as **Baruch**

Jeremiah never had his own family because he was commanded by God not to marry and have children.

He was also not allowed to attend social functions e.g. funeral and weddings.

He is widely known as a suffering prophet because of the kind of the suffering he underwent as a prophet.

As a prophet he preached against social and religious evils and pronounced God's judgment upon the people. He also preached a message of hope and restoration to the people of Israel who were in exile.

The call of Jeremiah (1: 4 – 19)

The call of Jeremiah was presented in a form of dialogue. The word of God came to him and told him that even before he was conceived in the womb, the Lord knew him.

The Lord had conceived him and appointed him to be a prophet in the Nation.

He tried to resist the call by saying that he did not know how to speak and he was young.

God assured him and promised to protect him and give him his own words to speak. God touched his lips symbolizing that he had put his own words into Jeremiah's mouth.

During the call, he was shown two visions;

- i. A branch of Almond tree – this vision symbolize that God was watching over the people to see the fulfillment of his message of destruction through the prophet.
- ii. A boiling pot facing a way from the North-it signified that God was going to use a nation from the north to destroy Judah for their evil deeds.

Jeremiah was convinced by God and he finally accepted the call in faith and obedient.

Jeremiah's response to God's call.

- He was reluctant/ hesitant/ he did not know what to say
- He was afraid
- He was not ready
- He felt immature because he was young
- He had a dialogue with God
- He saw the visions that changed his attitude towards God
- He accepted to be sent by God

Reasons why Jeremiah was not willing to accept the call to become a prophet

- He felt he was too young/ inexperienced as a prophet
- He did not have message for the people
- He lacked confidence/ courage
- He did not know how to speak/ he was not a good speaker
- He was afraid of confronting/ talking against the kings/ elders
- The task was too difficult/ overwhelming for him
- He was not sure of what was to be done by the people for the message he was going to deliver/ message to be delivered

Qualities of God from the call of prophet Jeremiah.

- (i) God is the creator.
- (ii) God knows every person by name/all knowing.
- (iii) God is a planner/chooses/appoints.
- (iv) God is holy.
- (v) God hates/punishes evil.
- (vi) God is just/judges.
- (vii) He is caring/concerned.
- (viii) God is merciful/forgiving.
- (ix) God is universal.
- (x) God is a protector/deliverer.
- (xi) He is powerful/almighty/omnipotent.
- (xii) He is beyond human understanding/transcendent.
- (xiii) He is everywhere/omnipresent.
- (xiv) He restores.
- (xv) He is a provider

Lessons Christian learn from the call of Jeremiah.

- I. They should be ready to accept God's call willingly the way Jeremiah accepted.
- II. They learn that God chooses anyone to perform his work regardless of his status.
- III. They learn that God empowers people he sent to perform his work e.g. He gave Jeremiah his own words.
- IV. God protects his people from any form of persecution and torture.
- V. God calls them to serve him in different capacities.
- VI. God prepare them to perform his work even before they were born.
- VII. They should not allow human weakness to hinder them from performing God's work.

VIII. Christians should not be discouraged/ feel inadequate when given difficult tasks

Evils condemned by prophet Jeremiah

- I. Necromancy
- II. Dishonesty / Deception
- III. False prophecy
- IV. Human sacrifices
- V. Idolatry

Necromancy (Jeremiah 27: 8) (29: 9)

- Is the practice of predicting future events through mystical powers such as magic
- It is the practice of consulting other powers apart from God, e.g. evil spirits, magicians, diviners' seers etc.

I. Reasons why Jeremiah condemned Necromancy

- i. He told people that it was against Yahweh for them to practice necromancy.
- ii. It showed lack of faith and trust in Yahweh their true God.
- iii. It was a form of idol worship
- iv. Magicians and diviners were powerless and only God could help them.
- v. It showed their disobedience to God.
- vi. It showed their lack of knowledge of their God Yahweh
- vii. Necromancy polluted the true worship of Yahweh
- viii. It demonstrated hypocrisy
- ix. It alienated the Israelites from God

II. Dishonesty / deception (Jeremiah 7: 4 – 7) (Jeremiah. 9: 2 – 8)

- It means cheating or telling lies
The leaders of Judah e.g. priests and prophets were cheating the people by telling them that the temple was not going to be destroyed.
They lied to the people that God was not going to punish them.
They practiced immoral acts such as adultery yet they claimed to be Godly.

➤ **Jeremiah condemned their dishonesty because of the following reasons**

- I. The prophets and priests gave people false hope that it was well when it was not.
- II. They told people that Jerusalem temple would not be destroyed because it was a dwelling place of God.
- III. The people practiced immoral acts such as adultery.
- IV. They oppressed the poor people among them and still claim to be Godly.
- V. The people refused to repent despite their immoral way of life.
- VI. They deceived one another and spread malicious lies.
- VII. They were corrupt in their dealing with others.

III) False prophecy (JERM. 28: 15 – 16)

Hananiah, a false prophet challenged Jeremiah when he prophesied that Judah would soon be freed from Babylon rule and that the exiles would come back to their land. He also said that the vessels of the temple would be returned back. Jeremiah prophesied the opposite and told the people that God was using Babylon to punish them. He assured them that they would be taken to exile in Babylon where they would suffer in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

Jeremiah also prophesied the death of Hananiah which took place the same year.

Reasons why Jeremiah condemned false prophets.

- I. False prophets lied to people , kings and rules
- II. They cheated that they were sent by God yet God did not send them.
- III. They prophecy for their own selfish gain because they expected payments for their prophecies.
- IV. They were liked by people because they told them what they wanted to hear.
- V. They did not receive special call from God to prophecy.
- VI. They were misleading people from the covenant way of life.
- VII. They wanted to make themselves popular hence they did not speak about evil

IV) Human Sacrifice (Jer. 32: 33 – 35)

- It is the act of killing a human being for religious purposes.
The Israelites adopted this act from their Canaanite neighbors
The people of Judah sacrificed their sons and daughters to Baal who required human sacrifice at the valley of Hinnom.

Reasons why Jeremiah condemned human sacrifice

- I. It was condemned by God in his command ‘‘do not kill’’
- II. It showed that the people of Israel had abandoned their God Yahweh.
- III. It showed that the people of Israel did not understand the nature of their God e.g. Jealousy.
- IV. Human sacrifice defiled the land that God had given them.
- V. It showed lack of respect to life which was sacred.
- VI. It was a sign of lack of love to God and one another
- VII. It is an act of idolatry.

V) Idolatry (Jer. 2: 27 – 28)

The people of Israel had abandoned their God Yahweh and engaged in idol worship.
Idols were placed everywhere including God’s temple
They worshiped idols such as Molech and Baal.

Reasons why Jeremiah condemned Idolatry

- I. It showed rebellion against Yahweh and the covenant relationship
- II. It was a sign that Israel had lacked trust or faith in Yahweh.
- III. It promoted syncretism in Judah.
- IV. The people of Judah had abandoned Yahweh as their true God.
- V. The people of Israel had gone against the command of God which says ‘‘Do not have any other God beside me’’
- VI. Idol worship corrupted and defiled the temple which was a holy place
- VII. Idols were false works of human hands and did not power over the temple.
- VIII. It would lead to divine judgement unless they repented

Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon (Jer. 7: 1 – 8)

God instructed Jeremiah to stand at the temple gate and give sermon to the people.
In his sermon, he condemned the following evils that were done by the people of Judah

- I. False belief about the temple
- II. Defilement of the temple
- III. Idolatry
- IV. Human sacrifices

- V. Social injustice
- VI. Dishonesty / deception
- VII. Hypocrisy / insincere worship
- VIII. Burning incense to Baal
- IX. Oppressing and exploiting the orphans, widows, the poor and aliens
- X. Forced labor
- XI. Bribery and corruption

1) False belief about the temple

The people of Judah falsely believed that Jerusalem temple would not be destroyed. Jeremiah warned them that Jerusalem temple no longer served its purposes and God was going to destroy it using a foreign nation.

II) Hypocrisy / Insincere worship

The people were not sincere in their worship because they could break the commandments and do evil things e.g. adultery and then go in the temple to worship God.

Jeremiah warned them that God was not ready to be deceived through their outward ritual worship such as sacrifices

III) Defilement of the temple

The people of Judah defiled the temple by placing many idols in it, practicing sexual immorality e.g. adultery and prostitution.

The temple was no longer a sacred place for God worship.

Jeremiah warned them that God was going to punish them for defiling the temple if they do not repent.

IV) Human Sacrifice

The people had built high places in Topheth in the valley of Hinnon where they sacrificed their daughters and sons to Molech and Baal.

Jeremiah condemned this habit of human sacrifice because they broke God's command "do not kill"

V) Social injustice

The people of Judah were oppressing the poor, orphans and widows. They were also guilty of murder and shading of innocent blood.

Jeremiah condemned them of oppressing the poor which was against of brotherhood.

VI) Idolatry

They practiced idolatry by offering sacrifices to their idols e.g. Baal and Molech.

They also worshiped Yahweh and their gods.

Jeremiah warned them that God was going to punish them because of practicing idolatry

VI) Dishonesty / deception

The people of Judah were dishonest in their dealings with others.

Their leaders told lies concerning the position of Jerusalem temple.

The priests and prophets assured the people that were going saved from Babylonian army yet they were not.

Jeremiah condemned the priests and prophets for misleading the people by telling lies.

Relevance of Jeremiah's temple sermon to Christians today.

- I. They should avoid being Hypocritical the way the people of Judah were but practice sincerity in worship.
- II. They should not engage in idol worship like the people of Judah but instead worship one God alone
- III. They should condemn all the evils in the society the way Jeremiah condemned in his sermon.
- IV. They should strive to live Holy life for them to be accepted in God's temple for worship.
- V. They should not engage in human sacrifice like the people of Judah but respect life because it is sacred.
- VI. They should always be honest and tell the truth the way Jeremiah advised the people to practice honestly.
- VII. They should not oppress the poor the way the people of Judah did but be ready to assist them all the time.
- VIII. They should avoid sexual immoralities e.g. adultery because it was condemned by Jeremiah among the people of Judah
- IX. They should be aware of false prophets and avoid them because they can mislead them the way they misled the people of Judah.
- X. Christian leaders should pronounce God's judgment on people the way Jeremiah pronounced to the people because of their evil ways.

Jeremiah's teaching on Judgment and punishment

- God's judgment was just because he was going to punish all the sinners regardless of their status.
- God is a judge, he judges by looking into our hearts
- God would bring the punishment from the North to destroy the city and people because of their evil ways.
- No one will escape God's punishment, even those who tried to escape would be found.
- God will execute his judgement by means of political/ historical events.
- People will be taken to exile
- God's judgement is universal; it will extend to other nations.
- The purpose of God's judgement was to correct the sinners.
- God gave his people time to repent before he punishes them.
- He warned the people that the punishment will be very severe and many will suffer pain.
- It would be characterized by lack of peace, famine and slavery
- There will be widespread killing
- Judgement period would last for 70 years.

Jeremiah's Symbolic Acts Related to Judgment and Punishment

Symbolic act is an action performed to demonstrate/ to pass particular message of religious significant.

Jeremiah used symbolic acts to demonstrate how judgment would affect the people of Judah.

He performed the following acts;

- I. The linen waist cloth.
- II. Jeremiah's personal life.
- III. Jeremiah's visit to a potter's house.
- IV. The broken earthen flask.
- V. The vision of two baskets of figs.
- VI. Wearing of the wooden ox-yoke.
- VII. The parable of the wineskin and jars.

I) The linen waist clothes (Jer. 13:1-11).

Jeremiah was instructed by God to buy a linen waist cloth & put it on for some time and not to dip it in water. After that, he instructed him to remove it, go & hide it on cleft/crevice of a rock along river Euphrates.

Later on God instructed him to go and remove it, he found it ruined and completely destroyed.

Its symbolic meaning

The new waist cloth symbolized the purity and holiness of Israel as the chosen people of God.

Putting on the cloth on the waist symbolized close relationship between God and Israelites before going against the covenant.

The spoiled waist cloth symbolized the destruction of Judah because of their evil ways.

It showed that they were completely nothing before their God Yahweh.

The act of not putting the cloth in water symbolize the act of their failure to repent their sins.

II) Jeremiah's personal life(Jer. 16: 1 – 21)

Jeremiah was instructed by God to remain single without a wife and children.

He was instructed not to attend any social function e.g. wedding or funerals.

Symbolic meaning

God used Jeremiah's life to demonstrate the suffering in which the people of Judah would be subjected to under the Babylonian.

His loneliness showed that God will withdraw his love and mercy upon the people and he would no longer be their God.

His loneliness also symbolized that many people will die and the remnants would have no one to comfort them and mourn with them.

The time of feasting and happiness were over and it was now the time for suffering and mourning

III) Jeremiah's visit to a potter's house (Jer. 18: 1 – 12)

Jeremiah was instructed by God to visit a potter's house.

He found a potter molding clay vessels and watched as he did his work.

He molded a clay vessel but when it did not give him a good shape, he destroyed it and remolded another one.

He finally got a perfect vessel and was happy with it.

Symbolic meaning

- The potter symbolizes God and the clay symbolizes Israel nation and other nations.
- If the nation went astray and broke the covenant, God would destroy that nation just as a potter destroys a vessel that is not well shaped.
- If a nation go astray and returns to God through repentance, God would forgive them and restore them back to him.
- This showed that God was ready to forgive the people of Judah if only they were to repent and come back to him.
- On the other hand, God was going to destroy the people of Judah if they refused to repent their sins and come back to him.

Lessons learnt from Jeremiah's visit to the potter

- God is the creator
- We should repent because God is ready to forgive our sins
- God punishes sins
- We should be obedient to God's instructions just like Jeremiah
- We should repent to escape God's judgement
- God speaks to us through daily occurrences

IV) The broken earthen flask (Jer. 19: 1 – 15)

God instructed Jeremiah to buy earthen flask. He then told him to take some elders and priests to accompany him to the valley of Hinnom at Topheth where human sacrifice took place.

While at the valley of Hinnom, Jeremiah pronounced God's judgment upon the people. He told the elders and the priest that God was going to destroy them because of shading innocent blood at Hinnom.

Jeremiah was then told by God to break the flask publicly before the elders and the priest.

Significant/symbolic meaning

- Breaking of the earthen flask symbolized that God was going to destroy the people of Judah because of practicing human sacrifice which was against God's command.
- Many people were going to die and some would be buried at Hinnom because there would be no any other place for burial.
- Their houses, places of worship and cities would be destroyed.

V) The vision of two baskets of figs (Jer. 24:1 – 10)

God showed Jeremiah a vision of two baskets of figs. one basket contained good fruits, so good to be eaten while the other contained bad fruits, so bad not to be eaten.

Significance / symbolic meaning

- Basket of good fruits symbolized the people of Judah who willingly accepted to go to Babylon as exiles.
- God would restore these people back to their land and would make them prosper.
- The basket of bad fruits symbolized the kings, princes, the people who remained in Judah and those who fled to Egypt.
- These people refused to go to exile and God was going to destroy them in their own land.

VI) The parable of the wineskin and the jars.

- The parable about the jars that were empty but were filled with wine. When they were hit against one another, they broke due to the impact.
- The empty jars represented the people of Judah and their leaders. They represented the instrument that God was going to use to punish them because of their wicked ways.

VII) Wearing of the wooden ox-yoke (Jer. 27: 1 – 22)

God told Jeremiah to make a wooden ox- yoke and put it on his neck. He was to walk with it around the whole city of Jerusalem.

Significance / meaning

- This showed the coming of subjection of Judah under the Babylonian rule.
- The people were going to serve as slaves in Babylon and subjected to a lot of suffering.
- The heavy duties that they would have is compared to the wooden ox-yoke.

The fall of Jerusalem and the exile of the people of Judah (Jer. 39)

- Jerusalem was attacked and invaded by Babylon during the reign of King Zedekiah.
- The Babylonian siege of Jerusalem took 30 months only. Zedekiah resisted hoping to be helped by Egypt. Egypt did not assist and the city was surrounded and sieged.
- The starved army of Jerusalem became weak and was smashed by the strong Babylonian leading to the fall of the city.
- The Babylonian set up headquarter at Mizpa and Gedalia was made the new governor of Judah.
- King Zedekiah tried to escape to Rabbath through Arabah but was captured together with his men near Jerusalem and take to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. He ordered for the killing of Zedekiah's sons and officials.
- Zedekiah's eyes were gorged out and he was frog-marched and dragged into humiliation and was taken to exile in Babylon. The city was looted, houses, temple and its walls destroyed leaving it defenseless. The royal court officials, army officers, craft men and middle class residents of Jerusalem were taken to exile. The land and the city including the vineyard and the field was given to the poor who remained in Judah.
- Jeremiah was given freedom and treated well by Nebuchadnezzar because of his prophesies about exile.

Jeremiah's suffering and lamentation

I. Plot against his life(Jer. 11: 18 – 23)

- After Jeremiah had delivered God's message of judgment upon the people, his own relatives and friends from Anathoth plotted to kill him.
- Jeremiah was disturbed and pleaded with God to take revenge against them.

II. False accusation (Jer. 26:1 – 24)

- After his temple sermon, Jeremiah was accused of blasphemy when he prophesied the destruction of the temple.
- They also accused him of a traitor because they thought that he was joining the Babylonian to fight the people of Judah. However, Jeremiah did not lose hope because of false accusations but he went ahead to pronounced God's judgment as he was told.

III. Mockery by his people (Jer. 17: 14 – 18)

- Jeremiah was mocked by his people because his prophecies had not been fulfilled.
- Jeremiah however continued to pray to God to fulfill his prediction.

IV. Jeremiah's isolation / loneliness(Jer.15:10-21)

- Jeremiah was forced by God to live lonely and isolated life for God's sake.
- He complained to God because of emotional pain he was undergoing.
- God however encouraged him and reassured him that he shall be with him and protect him.

V. Jeremiah's torture by Pashhur (Jer. 20: 1 -6)

- Jeremiah's preaching on judgment was rejected by pashhur the priest.
- He beat him up and put him in the stocks the whole night.
- However, this did not silence Jeremiah; he went ahead and pronounced judgment on pashhur, his family and his friends.
- He told him that they shall be taken to Babylon where they will die and be buried.

VI. Jeremiah's imprisonment (Jer. 37: 11 – 21)

- Jeremiah was beaten and imprisoned because he was accused of deserting his people and joining the Babylonian to fight against the people of Judah.
- This accusation amounted to a charge of treason which was punishable by death.
- After long time however, King Zedekiah rescued Jeremiah from the prison in the house of Jonathan and put him in the court of the guard where he was taken care of.

VII) Jeremiah in the cistern (Jer. 38: 1 – 13)

- Jeremiah was thrown into a cistern to die for prophesying that the people of Israel would die of sword, famine and some could be taken to Babylon.
- Jeremiah suffered because there was no water in the cistern.
- Abimelech pleaded with the king and Jeremiah was finally removed in the cistern and put in court of the guard where he stayed.

VIII) Jeremiah's inner struggle / disturbance (Jer. 12: 1 – 6)

- He was disturbed by the fact that the weak and faithless prospered yet God did not punish them immediately.
- He wondered why he was suffering and yet he was a servant of God.
- He asked God to punish the weak so that he may have peace in his heart.

Relevance of Jeremiah suffering and lamentation to Christians today.

- I) They should not lose hope in times of difficulty but struggle up to the end the way Jeremiah struggled.
- II) They should remain firm in telling the truth the way Jeremiah told the people the truth concerning judgment.
- III) They should pray constantly to God in times of trouble the way Jeremiah prayed.

- IV) Christians are assured of God's protection in all that they do the way he assured Jeremiah his protection.
- V) They should be aware of false prophets and condemn their messages the way Jeremiah did.
- VI) They learn that trials and persecution strengthen their faith in God the way Jeremiah's faith was strengthened.
- VII) They should be ready to face rejections even from their own families and relatives the way Jeremiah faced.

Jeremiah Symbolic Acts Related to Hope and Restoration.

✓ **The vision of two baskets of figs (Jer. 24: 1 – 10)**

- ✓ Jeremiah was shown two baskets of figs, one contained good ripe figs, while the other contained bad figs.
- ✓ The good figs represented the people of Judah who willingly went to exile in Babylon and God would restore them back to their land where they would prosper again.
- ✓ Bad figs represent King Zedekiah, princes and other leaders who refused to submit to the Babylonian rule and they would die in exile.

✓ **Buying of the land by Jeremiah (Jer. 32: 1 – 15)**

God told Jeremiah to go and buy a land from his cousin Hanamel in the land of Anathoth

Symbolic meaning

- I) It was a sign to show that there was hope that God would bring his people back to the land.
- II) It showed that the people of Judah still had a hope for future despite their suffering in exile.
- III) It showed that the people would resume their normal lives e.g. construct homes and cultivate their lands.
- IV) It showed that God was going to fulfill his promise of returning people back to their land.
- V) It showed that restoration is going to take place at God's own time and the people were to be patient and wait.

✓ **The vision of wooden-ox-yoke (Jer. 30: 1 – 8)**

The lord told Jeremiah that he will break the wooden-ox-yoke and this would signifies the end of suffering and oppression of his people in Babylon.

Those who willingly went to Babylon would be restored after a long period of suffering.

The yoke would be broken and they would no longer be under the foreign rule a gain.

✓ **Jeremiah's letter to the exiles (jer. 29: 1 – 14)**

Jeremiah wrote a letter of encouragement to the exiles in Babylon. In his letter he encouraged them in the following ways:

- I) To built houses and settle down
- II) To plant gardens and eat their produce.
- III) To marry, have children and increase in number.
- IV) To live in peace in Babylon and pray for the welfare of their masters
- V) Not to listen to the false prophet who told lies about the safety of their city and quick return to Jerusalem.
- VI) God would restore them back into their land after 70 years in exile

- VII) God had good plans for them, plans for prosperity and not for destruction
- VIII) After restoration, Jerusalem city and temple would be rebuilt.
- IX) They would be no longer taken back to exile after restoration.
- X) God would make a new covenant with them after restoration.
- XI) They were to trust in God and not to give up.

THE NEW COVENANT TAUGHT BY JEREMIAH

(Jer. 31: 31 – 34, 23: 29 – 33, 23: 5 – 8, 29 :)

During the making of Sinai covenant, the people of Israel promised to obey God and live as per the covenant way of life.

However, as time went by, they failed to keep the covenant despite constant reminders from God's prophets.

God had therefore used other ways to establish permanent relationship with his people.

He was to establish a new and everlasting covenant with the people.

The new covenant prophesized by Jeremiah would have the following characteristics;

- I) God's law would be written in people's heart.
- II) There would be personal knowledge of God where everyone would know God personally.
- III) There would be spontaneous forgiveness of sins in the new covenant.
- IV) In the new covenant, God will not remember the sins of the people anymore.
- V) Each person would be responsible for his / her own sins.
- VI) The new covenant would bring into being a new community which will belong to God.
- VII) The people of God would be known as the new Israel.
- VIII) It was going to be initiated by God.
- IX) The restored community would be ruled by righteous king raised from the house of David.
- X) The new covenant will last forever.
- XI) God would give the Israelites a new heart to ensure they were in harmony with God.

Quiz – Give four differences between the old covenant under Moses and the new covenant foretold by prophet Jeremiah

- I) In the old covenant the laws of God were written on a stone tablet while in the new covenant, the laws were written in people's heart.
- II) The old covenant was not everlasting, while the new covenant was to last forever.
- III) In the new covenant, each person would be responsible for his / her own sins, while in the Old Testament each person was not responsible for his / her own sins.
- IV) The old covenant did not bring into being a new community, while in the new covenant would bring into being a new community which will belong to God.
- V) In the old covenant God remembered the sins of his people, while in the new covenant; God could not remember the sins of his people anymore.

Lessons Christians learn from Jeremiah's teaching on the new covenant.

- I) Christian should internalize God's laws in their heart.
- II) They should have a personal relationship with God.
- III) They learn that there is individual responsibility of sins
- IV) They have an everlasting relationship with God.
- V) The new covenant is fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ.

- VI) They should have faith in God for them to be accepted to be God chosen people.
- VII) They should repent their sins for them to be forgiven.
- VIII) They learn that God is merciful for he is ready to forgive sins.

Relationship between Jeremiah's prophetic teachings and the teachings of Jesus in the new testament.

- I) Jeremiah preached against the oppression of the poor, Jesus also taught on the need to care for the poor in his parables.
- II) Jeremiah condemned leaders who lead people away from the covenant way of life, Jesus also condemned Jewish religious leaders for practicing hypocrisy.
- III) Jeremiah prophesied about the new covenant, Jesus fulfilled this covenant through his suffering, death and resurrection.
- IV) Jeremiah warned the people against misusing the temple; Jesus also chased traders out of the temple for misusing it.
- V) Jeremiah warned the people against false prophets, Jesus also warned the people about false prophet who would come in his name from his teachings on eschatology.
- VI) Jeremiah was rejected by his relatives and friends; Jesus was also rejected in his home Nazareth.
- VII) Jeremiah was mocked, beaten and arrested; Jesus was also mocked, arrested and crucified.
- VIII) Jeremiah prophesied about the destruction of Jerusalem temple and its city, Jesus also prophesied about the destruction of Jerusalem city.
- IX) Both stood for the covenant way of life and preached about one God Yahweh.
- X) Jeremiah was accused of blasphemy when he spoke about the temple and the way Jesus was accused.

Quiz –

- 2006 1. - a. Identify the symbolic acts used by prophet Jeremiah to demonstrate God judgment And punishment on Israelites.
- b. what lessons do Christians learn from Jeremiah's teachings on new covenant.
- 2008 1. a. Explain the significance of the act of buying land by Jeremiah.
- b. Outline the suffering of prophet Jeremiah during his ministry.
- 2010 1. a. State Jeremiah's teachings on the temple sermon.
- b. Why was Jeremiah reluctant to accept God's call?
- 2. Explain Jeremiah's teaching on judgment and punishment
- 3. Explain the significance of the linen waist cloth that was bought by Jeremiah.
- 4. How did Jeremiah encourage people to live in hope during the exile?
- 5. Explain Jeremiah's symbolic acts related to hope and restoration.
- 6. Give relationship between Jeremiah's teaching on new covenant ad teachings of Jesus in the New Testament
- 7. Describe the call of prophet Jeremiah.

NEHEMIAH

Call of Nehemiah

Political background of Nehemiah

- ✓ The Kingdom of Judah had been taken over by Babylon
- ✓ The Babylonians had destroyed the walls of the city / the temple / Jerusalem
- ✓ The King / royal court officials / able people were deported / exiled to Babylon
- ✓ Persia conquered Babylon / Jews came under the control of Persians
- ✓ The Persian Kings ruled the subjects through governors
- ✓ The conquered people were to pay tribute / taxes to Persia
- ✓ The Persian King / Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Judah in three stages;
 - The first group led by Joshua the high priest and Sheshbazar who become the 1st Governor of Judah
 - The second group led by Ezra the priest
 - The third group led by Nehemiah who was given power by the King to become governor of Judah.

Social background of Nehemiah

- When the people of Judah came back to their land, they realized that those who were left behind were influenced by the foreign culture.
- They had married the foreigners who gave rise to Samaritans. There was a big difference between Jewish and Samaritans.
- There were hostility between the Jewish and foreigners as some foreigners dispersed them.
- There was a grass of wealthy and powerful Jews who oppressed them. Some of the poor people were sold into slavery.
- Their land was taken by the rich for failure to pay debts.
- Nehemiah was very angry for the Jewish for oppressing his fellow people.
- He ordered the return of the property of the poor and gave donations to the needy.

Religious background of Nehemiah.

- While in exile, the Jewish continue to practice their religion because they were allowed by the King.
- On return to Judah, the Jewish begun to rebuilt their religious life
- They started by constructing the altar for God's worship.
- They reconstructed Jerusalem temple and the wall, despite hostility from the Samaritan.
- The wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt in 52 days under the leadership of Nehemiah.
- Jerusalem gradually began to be the centre of Jewish worship as it was before.

Historical life of Nehemiah

- Nehemiah was one of the Jews who was exiled in Babylon.
- The name Nehemiah means Yahweh has comforted.
- He was a son of Hacalia of Judah
- Unlike Amos and Jeremiah, Nehemiah was not a prophet.
- He is categorized under historical books in the bible.

- He worked as a cup-bearer in the Kings place.
- He used to taste wine before it was given to the King.
- One day, Nehemiah received news about the suffering of his people who returned from exile. He decided to go back to assist the people to settle by constructing Jerusalem wall.
- He asked permission from King Artaxerxes and he was granted.
- The King appointed him as a new governor of Judah.

Occasions when Nehemiah prayed (Neh. 1:4-11, 2:4-9, 5:19, 6:9, 13:14, 22:29-31)

- (i) Nehemiah prayed when he got a bad report from the Jews that Jerusalem was in ruins
- (ii) When he was about to ask for permission from King Artaxerxes I to go to Judah and rebuild the wall of Jerusalem
- (iii) When Sanballat ridiculed the rebuilding of the wall
- (iv) When Sanballat / Tobiah / Ammonites threatened to fight the people of Jerusalem
- (v) After his condemnation of the oppression of the poor, he prayed asking god to reward him.
- (vi) When he was threatened to be killed by his enemies / Geshene the Arab
- (vii) When he had purified the rooms in the house of God
- (viii) After warning the people against ignoring the Sabbath law
- (ix) After he had stopped the Israelites from intermarrying with the foreigners.

Reasons why Nehemiah prayed

- ✓ To get strength to go the king to ask for permission
- ✓ To seek protection against his enemies
- ✓ Due to feeling of compassion to the ruined city of Jerusalem
- ✓ To intercede for the rich so that they don't oppress the poor
- ✓ To be strengthened from death threats
- ✓ To seek God's guidance on how to assign duties to the priests
- ✓ To request God to punish those who engage in foreign languages
- ✓ To plead with God not to destroy the temple

Importance of prayer in the life of a Christian.

- (i) Prayer is a way of communicating with God / Fellowship with God
- (ii) Through prayer Christian's faith in God is strengthened
- (iii) Christians have opportunity to confess / seek for forgiveness through prayer

- (iv) Through prayer Christians thank God for blessings received
- (v) Christians ask / petition God for their need through prayer
- (vi) They use prayer to intercede / show concern for others
- (vii) Prayers are made in obedience to the teachings of Jesus / the Bible
- (viii) It is a way of emulating the example set by Jesus / the early Church
- (ix) Christians praise / adore God through prayer
- (X) Prayer promote unity among believers.

Occasions when Christians pray

- ✓ When asking God for forgiveness
- ✓ During the time of need
- ✓ When praying for others/ interceding for others
- ✓ When giving thanks to God
- ✓ During worship
- ✓ During ceremonies e.g. wedding
- ✓ When asking for God's protection
- ✓ When rebuking evil

Nehemiah's leadership qualities

1. Faithful / Trust – Nehemiah trusted in God and relied on him for protection and strength to do his work.
2. Prayerful – He constantly prayed seeking God's guidance and will before making important decision e.g. he prayed before asking permission from the king to go back home.
3. Hardworking / commitment – He was totally dedicated to the rebuilding of the wall which he was able to complete within 52 days.
4. Team player/ spirit – He motivated his people to work as a team and also joined them in the work.
5. A good planner/ organizer - he organized workers to perform their specific duties ensuring that everybody was allocated work.
He also organized in advance how the reconstruction of the wall was going to take place.
6. Compassionate – He protected the under privileged e.g. poor and urged fellow Jewish not to oppress them.
7. Patriotic – he loved his motherland Judah as well as his people.
8. Wise – he made wise decisions at the right time as a leader e.g. when his enemies tried to trick him, he judged the situation wisely and say no.
9. Initiative – When he heard that his people were suffering, he took action to go home and assist his people to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.

10. Honest – his prayers showed how honest he was with himself and God and the people he served.
He was also honest when he admitted that he had oppressed the poor and accepted give part of his tax to assist the poor.
11. Role model – He led by example practiced what he preached.
12. Humble-he humbly went to the king to ask for permission

Relevance of Nehemiah's leadership to Christians

1. Christians should be passionate and mindful of other people's welfare
2. They should be committed and hardworking when serving God and others
3. They should condemn all forms of injustices in the society
4. They should trust in God and seek for hid divine guidance
5. Christian leaders should be honest and open to God
6. Christian leaders should promote the worship of God by condemning sins among people
7. They should be patriotic to their country
8. Should not be discouraged by criticism as they do their work
9. Christians should respect all the ordained authority
10. They should pray for their enemies and be able to tolerate them
11. They should face challenges with a lot of courage

Problem faced by Nehemiah during the reconstruction of the wall and the temple.

1. Opposition from his enemies (4: 1 – 13)

Sanballat, Tobiah, the Ammonites of Arabs opposed Nehemiah's work of constructing the wall. They planned to attack Jerusalem and kill the contractors so as to stop the work of construction. Nehemiah prayed to God for protection. He also organized the people to guard the wall at the same time of constructing it.

2. Lack of co-operation (Neh. 3:5)

The Nobles of Tekoa refused to participate in the work because it was too bad for them. Some of the people betrayed him by supporting his enemies.

3. Plot against his life (Neh. 6: 1-9)

When the enemies saw that Nehemiah was determined to complete his work, they sent letter to him telling to go and see them.

He told them that he was doing important work which he could not leave.

4. False accusation

He was accused by his enemies for revolting against the King of Persia and claiming to be the King.

He dismissed their accusation as lies and become more determined in his work.

5. Challenge from a false prophet Shemaiah (6: 10 – 14)

Sanballat and Tobiah sent a false prophet called Shemaiah to pretend to be on the side of Nehemiah.

Shemaiah advised him to go and hide in the temple cheating him that people wanted to kill him.

Nehemiah refused to show cowardice and to commit sacrilege by taking refuge in the temple.

6. Mockery from enemies (4: 1 – 4)

His enemies ridiculed their efforts to constructing the wall by telling them that even a Fox could bring down the wall they were constructing.

Nehemiah however, encouraged his people to carry on with work despite mockery from the enemies.

7. Insecurity from his enemies

Importance of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem

- ✓ to enhance physical security
- ✓ to signify the beginning of new relationship with God
- ✓ to symbolize spiritual restoration of the people of Israel from exile
- ✓ to fulfill the prophesy of restoring/ preserving remnant
- ✓ to enhance Israel's self-esteem/ public image

Social Economic Problems encountered by Nehemiah as a governor of Judah (Neh. 5: 1 – 13)

Nehemiah faced other problems as a governor of Judah which was not connected to the building of the wall.

These problems include;

1. **Famine** – There was long period of famine which affected agriculture. They were forced to sell their sons and daughters to slavery in order to buy grains. They also sold their houses and vineyards to the rich in order to buy grains.
2. **Prosperity of the rich** – Those who came from exile prospered and become richer hence forming big gap between rich and the poor.
3. **Heavy Tax** – The people of Judah were to give additional tax for the rebuilding of the wall besides the maintenance of the governor. This become a heavy burden to the people especially the poor.
4. **Oppression of the poor by the rich (nobles)**
Poverty in Judah made the poor to sell their children into slavery. The rich charged high interest on the money borrowed by the poor.
The daughters were mostly affected as they were taken into a service of creditor.
5. **Violation of the Sabbath** – The people abused the Sabbath by doing their own activities e.g. business and farming. Nehemiah tried to ensure that the Sabbath was observed by locking the gates of the temple and employing temple guards to ensure that no one runs business during worship.
6. **Foreign Influence (Neh. 13: 1 – 3)**
The people were influenced by neighboring nations through intermarriage. This affected their culture and threatened identity of Jews.
7. **The of the temple by offering done by the officials**

Relevance of Nehemiah's Experiences to Christians today

- I. **Not to exploit the poor - Christians** should not exploit the poor people or abuse their offices.
- II. **Seek for forgiveness** – They should admit when they do wrong and seek forgiveness and reconciliation.
- III. **Expect oppositions** – Christians should expect oppositions as Nehemiah did.
- IV. **Seek God's guidance** – Christians should seek God's guidance constantly through prayer
- V. They should be on the lookout for external pressure which may prevent through Christian faith.
- VI. **Persevere** – Christians should persevere in God's work.
- VII. **Leadership involves suffering and sacrifice** – Christians lean that leadership involve suffering, prosecution and sacrifice.

VIII. Christians should live exemplary lives

IX. Christians should be careful in their faith so that they are not compromised

Renewal of the covenant

After the exile, the people of Judah strongly become aware of them being as the chosen people of God.

They felt it was good for them to live according to the covenant way of life.

There was a need for them to renew their covenant relationship with God

The covenant renewal ceremony was held in Jerusalem and it was led by the priest e.g. Ezra and other religious leaders. The renewal of the covenant took place in three stages;

1. Reading of mosaic law (Neh. 8: 1 – 8)

All the people of Judah gathered in the square inside the water gate in Jerusalem.

Ezra read the book of law to the people with great understanding

The people were touched by the law and felt sorrow for not obeying the law.

Ezra the Levite and Nehemiah told people not to be sorrowful but to rejoice because they were going to renew the covenant again where they would obey the laws a fresh.

2. Feast of Booths (tabernacles) (Neh. 8: 13- 18)

The people were made to celebrate the feast of Booth which they had not done for a long time.

They celebrated the feast of Booth for seven days according to mosaic laws.

They built the Booths and lived in them in remembrance of their lives in the wilderness.

3. A prayer of confession (Neh. 9: 6 – 37)

Important aspects found in prayer.

- I) They acknowledge God as the creator and sustainer of everything
- II) They viewed God as a gracious God.
- III) They viewed God as a forgiving God because of many times he forgave them.
- IV) Yahweh gave Israel kingdom and brought the victoriously into Canaan
- V) God punish the people because of their rebelliousness.
- VI) Yahweh is faithful because he promised to return to the people and he did so.
- VII) The people were taken into slavery due to their sins.

Agreement /promises/ Obligations of the Renewed Covenant (Nehe. 10: 29 - 39)

- I) **Keep Sabbath day holy** –They accepted to keep Sabbath day holy by not engaging in commercial dealings
- II) **Preserve integrity as chosen people** – To preserve the integrity of the community as the chosen people of God.
- III) To obey the Mosaic Law.
- IV) To stop foreign marriages.
- V) Dedicate first born and first fruits – To dedicate their first born sons and first fruits of their land to God.
- VI) **Land to rest after seven years** – To leave their land to rest after seven years.
- VII) To write off the debts which were burdening the poor people among themselves.
- VIII) **Contribute tithes and offerings** – They accepted to contribute tithes and other offerings to support the priest and the singers.

Lessons Christians learn from the renewal of the covenant

Lessons from the renewal of the covenant by Nehemiah

- Christians should repent their sins to be forgiven.
- They should lead righteous lives / be obedient.
- Christians should always pray to God.
- Christians should demonstrate humility.
- They should avoid groups that can negatively influence their faith in God.
- They should teach others the Word of God / Sabbath.
- They should set aside a day for worship.
- They should respect the church as a place for prayer.
- They should read the word of God regularly.
- They should share with the needy
- they should support church leaders
- they should forgive those who wrong them
- they should encourage others to repent
- repentance brings reconciliation with God and one another

Dedication of Jerusalem wall (Neh. 12: 27 – 43)

After rebuilding of the wall which took 52 days, Nehemiah later dedicated it to God.

He gathered all the Levites from the surrounding and they assembled in the city of Jerusalem for dedication ceremony.

The Levites started by purifying themselves first. They then purified the people so that they could stand up right before God.

They also purified Gates and the walls of Jerusalem.

After purification process, the people formed a grand procession.

They were then divided into two groups the first group moved towards the right being led by Ezra, the priest, the Levites and the musicians who were carrying trumpets and musical instruments of David.

The second group moved towards left and was led by Nehemiah, the priest and musician and other officials.

The people went round the wall singing and rejoicing.

They then converged in Jerusalem temple where they continued with the ceremony.

There was singing, celebrating sacrificial rituals and a lot of festive noise in the temple.

Finally, the people appointed men in charge of food stores who were supposed to distribute food in the temple.

Measures taken by Nehemiah to restore the Jewish community after the completion of the wall of Jerusalem

- Nehemiah organized for the mosaic law to be read to the people and interpreted
- He led the Jews in renewal of the covenant/ celebration of feasts of booths
- The people fasted/ held a national day of confession of their sins/ prayed for forgiveness

- The covenant was sealed through the signing of the covenant agreement by Nehemiah and other leaders
- He led the people in taking an oath of obedience in the mosaic law
- He redistributed the inhabitants of Jerusalem
- He dedicated the walls of Jerusalem in a ceremonial session
- He cleansed the temple and brought back the Levites into their positions
- Through the reading of the law to the Jewish, they isolated themselves from the foreigners
- He stopped traders from carrying out ceremonial activities at the temple gate on the day of Sabbath
- He discouraged the Jewish people from marrying their children to foreigners

NEHEMIAH'S FINAL REFORMS IN JUDAH

➤ A reform is a positive change which brings positive impact in the society. After the reconstruction of the wall, Nehemiah carried out several reforms which he felt were necessary to the people of Judah who were regarded as covenant people.

1. **Reinstating the Levites and singers in the temple**

The Levites and singers had left the temple because they were not supported by people. Nehemiah called them back to the temple to resume their work as singers and priests and assured them support they needed.

2. **Purification of the Levites (Priests)**

Nehemiah realized that the priest had engaged in activities which were ungodly. Before reinstating them back to their positions in the temple, he purified them so as to be pure before God.

3. **Reinstatement of the Sabbath**

The people violated the Sabbath by engaging in business activities and farming. Nehemiah reformed Sabbath by ensuring that the gates leading to business areas were closed on Sabbath day so that people could worship God first before engaging in business.

4. **Reinstatement of tithes and offerings**

Nehemiah encouraged the people of Judah to bring their tithes and offering in the temple. The people made a covenant with him and agreed that they would give tithes for support of priest in the temple.

5. **Cleansing of the temple**

Nehemiah realized that Tobiah who was a non-Israelite was residing in the temple. He chased away Tobiah and his property so as to make the temple pure before the lord.

6. **Discouraging intermarriages**

Nehemiah realized that part of the problem affecting people had been caused by intermarriages.

He discouraged intermarriages because it was against God's law.

He warned those who had married foreign wives to divorce them.

The priest who had married the foreigners were dismissed to avoid defiling priesthood Family.

Reasons why Nehemiah carried out religious reforms in Judah

- (i) To preserve the identity of the Jews as people of God / covenant way of life.

- (ii) To separate the Jews from foreign influence.
- (iii) To purify the temple which had been defiled by keeping a foreigner.
- (iv) To reinstate the services of the Levites as priests in the temple.
- (v) To restore the tithing system that had been forgotten for the upkeep of the Temple.
- (vii) In order to cleanse the Jews who had intermarried with foreigners / exposed to idolatry.
- (viii) Restore true worship

Relationship between Nehemiah's exemplary life and the life of Jesus in the New Testament

1. Nehemiah was a prayerful person as depicted in many occasions. Jesus also prayed e.g. during the transfiguration.
2. Nehemiah had compassion for his people when he learnt of their suffering and went back home to assist them. Jesus did work of compassion as healing the sick.
3. He was a reformer and did many reforms in Judah e.g. reinstating new covenant by dying on the cross for the sins of mankind.
4. Nehemiah cleansed the temple by chasing away Tobiah a foreigner. Jesus also cleansed the temple by chasing away the traders who had turned the temple into a den of robbers.
5. Nehemiah faced opposition during his work of constructing the wall. Jesus also faced opposition from Jews religious leaders during his ministry.
6. Nehemiah stood for what was right and condemned evil practiced by the rich who were oppressing the poor through the parables he used.
7. Nehemiah led the people as an example and was ready to serve the temple and participate in the work of constitution. Jesus also humbled by serving the disciples during the last supper.