C.R.E NOTES

FORM THREE

SUMMARIZED FORM THREE NOTES

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CHAPTER 1

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Teachings of Jesus on the role of the holy spirit

John 14:15-26, 16: 5-15, and Acts 1: 7- 8

Introduction

The Holy Spirit is the third person in the trinity.

There is the power of Christ, the power of God, and the Holy Spirit who gives gifts such as prophecy and healing.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned several times in the Bible;

- During creation in Genesis.
- At the annunciation of the birth of Jesus,
- At the beginning of the ministry of Jesus,
- During baptism,
- Revelation of Jesus in the temple,
- Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit during his mission or ministry, after resurrection and before ascension.

The role of Holy Spirit as taught by Jesus

John 14:15-26 and John 16: 5-15, Acts 1: 7- 8

Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit would:

i Teach Christians on a daily basis messages of Jesus

ii Live in the hearts of believers of Christ

iii Be an advocate, a counsellor, helper and a comforter to those who love Jesus Christ and obey Gods commandments.

iv He would remind the disciples the words said by Jesus Christ and introduce them to their deeper meanings.

v Interpret the deeper meaning of the messages of Jesus Christ.

vi Reveal the truth and mysteries of and about God.

vii Affirm the right of Jesus as the Son of God.
viii Reveal the glory of Jesus death.

ix Reveal what is right and wrong

x Give the disciples of Jesus power to become witnesses of Christ.

xi Give courage to the disciples of Jesus to face prosecution on the account of following Jesus.

xii Enable the disciples to expose the secret lives and heart of sinful people.

xiii Guide Christians; help believers to cast away evils spirits, to heal, to preach the word of God, to encourage, and to condemn evil in the society.

Peters message on the day of Pentecost
Acts 2: 14-41

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

Pentecostal day
On the Pentecostal day, the disciples were gathered in Jerusalem awaiting the promise of the Holy Spirit. And as promised, the Holy Spirit came in the form of a strong wind, and tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit rested on the head of each disciple.

The disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit. They spoke in new tongues. Some of the observers mistook this experience. They thought that the disciples were drunk with wine.

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

Peters Message
Joel 2: 28 — 32

Peter told the onlookers that

What was happening is fulfilment of Joels prophesies about the outpouring of Gods spirit. He said that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. This was proved by the miracles that Jesus performed. He emphasized that the suffering and death of Jesus was according to Gods plans. Jesus is a descendant of David. Death and the resurrection of Jesus fulfilled prophesies in the Old Testament.
God raised Jesus from the dead. He taught that Jesus had both the nature of God and Man. The apostles are the living witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus has been exalted and sits on the right hand of God where He is Lord and Judge. They holy Spirit is a gift from Jesus.

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

The disciples. They did many wonders and signs. They continued to live in unity, worshiping God, fellowshipping together, and breaking the bread.

**Relevance of the Pentecostal Experience**

(i) Speaking in diverse tongues signified that Christianity is a universal religion. It pointed out the importance of all languages when communicating to God.

(ii) Christians should be bold in their preaching. They should not be afraid as they have the counsel and helper, the Holy Spirit.

(iii) Christians should understand that God chooses anyone as a leader, preacher, and witness of Christ.

(iv) Pentecostal experience signifies that Christians need to receive and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

**Lessons Christians learn from Leadership of Peter.**

Christians should be:

(i) Courageous and stand up for Jesus Christ all the times.

(ii) Ready to spread the Gospel of Christ.

(iii) Win new converts to Jesus by inviting them to repentance.

(iv) Have faith in the risen Christ.

(v) Pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit like Peter.

(vi) Those in church leadership should take their roles seriously.

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

1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13&14.

Spiritual gifts are extra-ordinary favours, talents, abilities, and dispositions given to Christians by God for the benefit of all believers.

The gifts are used for the service of others and not for self-glorification and gratification.
These gifts are:

1) Gift of wisdom: — having deep understanding of issues- seeing far, being perceptive.

2) Gift of knowledge: — ability to understand the basic facts about Jesus, His mission and knowledge about spiritual issues.

3) The gift of faith: — refers to the confidence in God's help. It is deep trust in God.

4) The Gift of healing: — ability, and power to heal all forms of sickness by calling upon the name of Jesus Christ.

5) The gift of performing miracles: — gift of healing miracles, creative miracles for example, raising the dead, healing etc.

6) The gift of preaching

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

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

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

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

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

Paul stressed that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit are to be demonstrated with love.

He stressed that love, a fruit of the Holy Spirit is supreme over other spiritual gifts possessed by Christians.

It's the greatest of all. Speaking in tongues, preaching without love is useless.

- He said that love is patient and kind
- It's not jealous or boastful.
- It is not arrogant or rude
- It does not hold grudges or ill-mannered or selfish
- It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful
- It does not rejoice at wrong doings but rejoices in the truth
• Love bears, believes, hopes and endures all things
• It is ready to deep firm its faith, hope and its patience
• Love does not succumb to pressure but always perseveres

He justified that love is the greatest gift of the spiritual gifts because in prayer, the gift of tongues becomes nothing but meaningful when accompanied by love.

On faith, Paul says that even if one has faith that can move mountains but has no love, he is nothing.

Charity or generosity including sacrificing own life is nothing without love.

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

Mathew 7:15-20 | Corinthians 12:1-3 | Galatians 5:15-26

The gift must glorify Jesus so that one who is under the influence of

The Holy Spirit will be able to recognize Jesus as Lord and saviour

The test of love. The gift must bear the fruits of the spirit

One who is under the influence if the Holy Spirit is known by his or her way of life.

He/she will act and behave in accordance with the teachings of Jesus.

Should always in agreement with the scripture the Holy Spirit cannot contradict what is written

The gift must be subject to the word of God

The true gift will be guided by principles of sincerity and honesty

The true gift will humbly submit to God

The gift should encourage the growth of the church

**The fruits of the Holy Spirit**

Galatians 5:16-26

Paul taught that the fruit of the spirit are:

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

Goodness seeking to do best in their lives

Faithfulness having confidence in God

Gentleness being calm and avoiding violence

Self-control have strong control over their emotions

**Manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the church and Christians today**

Gifts of the Holy Spirit have been manifested in churches today through:

i. Leaders in church have displayed the gift of wisdom.

ii. Preachers and Christians ministers have been casting out demons and performing healing.

iii. There cases of interpretation of tongues and gift of prophecy in churches today.

iv. Through healing, healing and casting out demons among others

v. Christians helping the poor by giving generosity and in kindness.

vi. Through singing, dancing, shouting (fruit of joy)

vii. Through unity of believes and fellowships.

viii. Through praying in order to overcome temptations
CHAPTER 2

THE UNITY OF BELIEVERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Teachings of The Unity of Believers in Selected New Testament texts

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

The early Christians in Jerusalem demonstrated their unity by:

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

They showed oneness and unity as believers by expressing their oneness using various terms, images and symbols.

They regarded themselves as the people of God, the church and an Assembly of God. When they celebrated the last supper, eating of bread was a symbol of the body of Christ. They saw themselves as belonging to one tree with the vine and branches.

As followers of Christ, the early Church saw itself as the Bride of Christ.

Symbolic Expressions

The people of God

1 Peter 2: 9-10.

Peter has outlined the characteristics of the people of God. He says that the people of God are

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

**The Vine and the Branches**

John 15:1-10

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

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

**The Church or Assembly of God**

Ephesians 5:21 — 32

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

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

The Bride
2 Corinthians 11: 2, Revelations 21: 1 — 12

In the Old Testament, God calls Israel a bride. In the New Testament, Christians are referred to as “a bride in the New Jerusalem. God or Jesus Christ is the bridegroom.

Christians are reminded that the life on earth is a temporary home. Their real home is in heaven, the Holy city of God. Just as a bride is expected to be faithful to her husband, so are Christians expected to be faithful to God by observing the covenant way of life. Deviation from the covenant was portrayed as adultery.

John, in his book of revelations, sees a vision of a new heaven and a new earth in which faithful Christians will be rewarded. Christ will come to take His bride to eternity to live there forever.

The relationship between Christians and Jesus/God is like a marriage. It is a covenant. It is a relationship where the church (bride) is expected to submit to God. Jesus died for the church, a show of His or God’s love. Likewise, Christians should be committed in their relationship to God.

Causes of disunity in the early church and solutions Paul offered

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

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

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

- Christians settling disputes in civil courts. Paul advised they ought to talk over issues among themselves and agree to solve problems on their own (1 Corinthians 6).
• Dispute over marriage and divorce. Some Christians were opposed to marriage. Others were encouraging divorce. Paul addressed these issues in 1 Corinthians 7:1-16. Paul advised Christians that it was okay to marry or not to marry. But marriage was needed to stop immorality.

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

• Disputes about dressing during worship. If women were supposed to cover their head during worship and shave hair whether men were to keep long hair? (1 Cor 11:1-16).

• Lords Supper, (1 Corinthians 11:17 — 33). Some Christians were overeating and over drinking during the Holy Communion

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

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

Causes of disunity among believers and church in Kenya today

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

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

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

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

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

Differences in the practice of baptism

Arrogance and pride by some Christians.

Sexual immorality in the church, divorce and marriage issues.

Possible Solutions to disunity

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

ii  Learning to appreciate and respect the practices and belief of other Christians denominations.

iii Having or forming a common goal on church matters.

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

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

vi Avoiding doing wrong to a fellow Christian that would cause suffering and disharmony.
CHAPTER 3

SELECTED OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS AND THEIR TEACHINGS

Definitions of a prophet, and prophecy

The word prophet comes from a Hebrew word Rabii meaning one who is called or one who announces Gods message. A prophet is also referred to as a seer.

A prophet is a person sent by God to teach and give people messages about things to come in future from God. Prophets received divine messages from God and communicated them to the people.

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

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

Categories of prophets

There were many categories of prophets. These were:

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

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

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

d) The early prophets are Moses, Nathan Elijah, and Elisha. These prophets belonged to guilds schools. Their prophecies are not recorded under their names. Their prophecies are written in books, which do not bear their names.
e) Cultic prophets like Hannah (New Testament) served in the places of worship. They assisted the priest officiating worship.

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

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

**Importance of prophets in Israel**

i. They communicated God's will to the people of Israel.

ii. They foretold God's judgments and punishment for sinners.

iii. They condemned the behaviour of the rich towards the poor.

iv. Through their messages, people reformed their lives since they condemned all forms of evils.

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

vi. Prophets guided and gave people hope.

vii. They taught people the laws of God.

viii. They warned people of dangers to come.

ix. They condemned idolatry and stressed the worship of one true God, Yahweh.

x. They anointed the Kings in Israel.

xi. Kings consulted the prophets before any major undertaking such as war among others.

xii. They acted as conscience of kings. They advised them when they went wrong.

**Characteristics of true prophets**

i. They experienced God dramatically when He called them and in their ministry.

ii. They were God's spokesmen/women.

iii. They responded in faith to their call.

iv. God gave them specific tasks in their commission and His and support in their ministry.

v. They urged people to repent and turn back to God.
vi In their messages, they taught that God demands sincere worship and not elaborate rituals.

vii They understood God and taught about God righteousness, goodness, and loving care.

viii They condemned evil in the society and proclaimed Gods judgment and punishment.

ix They spoke with authority and acted with courage.

x They upheld God as a universal God for all nations.

xi Their utterances were true because they were fulfilled.

xii They spent a lot of their time in prayers.

xiii All the true prophets received opposition from their audiences.

The Characteristics of false prophets.

i Some of the prophecy of false prophets contradicted prophesies of the true prophets.

ii False prophets followed their own imaginations, and gave false hopes.

iii They told people what they wanted to hear.

iv They had no personal knowledge of God.

v They used evil forces such as magic, and divinations to call upon the spirits of the dead.

vi They were paid for prophesy and benefits materially from their clients.

vii They served Baal and were mainly immoral.

Writing messages of the prophets.

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

The canonical prophets had their works and prophecies recorded under their names. Canonical prophets are referred to as writing prophets.

1) They wrote what God spoke to them as He dictated. An example is Jeremiah who wrote what he was told...Get a scroll and write on it everything that I have told you about Israel, Judah and all nations....”. Jeremiah 36:2, Isaiah 30:8

2) The prophets message was probably written by other people. These were their assistant, secretary, scribe, and disciples or followers as the prophet prophesied.
3) Some of the prophetic messages could have been preserved as oral traditions and later written as books. A good example is 2 Kings.

**Content of the Prophetic messages**

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

1) Prophetic sayings were and still are oracles or poetic passages spoken by God himself through prophets. The prophecies were addressed to different nations. They carried specific teachings to the people, for example predicting future occurrences.

2) Narratives in the first person give an account of the prophets' testimony. They spoke of their experiences with God, and responses to the call of God. They tell us about prophets impelling compulsion to speak God's word. The narratives are written in the first person. They have a format: The Lord said to me... The year that King Uzziah died, I was the Lord..."

3) Narratives in the third person have messages written by a third party, i.e. not the prophet but another person. For example, "Isaiah said to them, "Thus you shall say to your master, thus says the Lord: “Do not be afraid of the words.” (Isaiah 37:6). The message recounts the prophet's personal life, and political background.

**Relationships between Prophesies in the Bible**

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

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

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

The New Testament is the new covenant spoken of by Prophet Jeremiah and other Prophets like Isaiah, Micah, and Nathan. Their prophecies about Messiah are fulfilled in the New Testament.
Similarities between prophets in the African traditional society and the Old Testament. In both traditions, prophets:

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

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

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

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

Old Testament prophets were God's spokesmen while the prophets in the African traditional society predicted what would happen to individuals, and communities.

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

In the Old Testament, prophets were called directly by God while in some African traditional communities, the prophetic office was hereditary.

The African traditional prophets dealt with family and local community issues while Old Testament prophets dealt with national issues, and crises.
African traditional prophets were diviners while Old Testament prophets consulted God.

Relevance of Old Testament prophets to Christians today

i  Christian should be ready to be messengers of God. The call has a prophetic role.

ii  As Gods spokesperson one should always stand for the truth. Christian should proclaim Gods will even if the message is not pleasant to the people.

iii Once appointed as a prophet, one should pass the messages to whoever they are sent to without fear or favour. Gods messengers should always condemn the social political economic evils in the society.

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

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

vi Christians should realize that God calls both men and women to His service. They should be ready to obey Gods prophetic call and not run away e.g. Jonah.

vii They should be concerned and take care of the welfare of the poor community members.
CHAPTER 4

PROPHET AMOS

Background to prophet Amos

Amos is one of the canonical or writing prophets. The book of Amos is a temptation of oracles spoken by the prophet on different occasions.

Religious background

Worshipped Yahweh and other gods. Idolatry was also present. This form of worship is called Syncretism. There was religious hypocrisy. Like today, there was an emphasis on external observances of religious practices and less concern for internal observances.

The priests were paid for religious work. Those who couldnt pay did not have religious ceremonies. They were offered at the expense of the poor. The prophets of God were rejected.

Social — economic — political background

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

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

Unfortunately, the rich people owned big luxurious houses. They drink wine, and used the most expensive perfumes. They acquired their wealth at the expense of the poor. They oppressed and exploited the poor.

The merchants of trade for example, were dishonest in their trade businesses. They sold bad wheat to unsuspecting customers and overcharged customers by measuring with false scales. Because of the inflated prices, the poor borrowed money from the rich at high interest rates to buy basic things like food. Hence, there was massive bribery and corruption in society and law courts.
As a result, the poor lacked basic necessities or needs like food, shelter, and clothing.

It was at this time when God sent Amos to give prophecy to Israel.

The call of Amos
Amos 1:1,3:8,7:10 — 15

Prophet Amos was born in a village called Tekoa in Judah, the southern kingdom.

Before his call, Amos was a shepherd and a dressер of sycamore trees.

He was not a professional prophet. But God called him to be a prophet. He received his call in form of a vision around 758 BC.

Amos responded to God’s call with obedience. He felt a deep compulsion to prophecy (Amos 3:8). God directed him to give his message to the people of Israel, the northern kingdom (Amos 7:15). He was asked to speak the will of Yahweh.

He was also to foretell punishment if Israelites did not repent their sins. His message was opposed, and challenged by Amaziah the priest of Bethel.

Visions of Amos
Amos 7: 1 — 9, 8:1 — 3. 9:1 — 4)

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

The vision of the locusts (Amos 7:1 — 3)
Amos saw a swarm of locusts being sent by God to destroy all plants and food crops in the land. The locusts were a sign of disaster; which God was going to send to Israel as a punishment for their disobedience. Amos cried to God to forgive the people. God heard and changed his mind.

The vision of a great fire (Amos 7:4 — 6)
Amos saw a vision of a supernatural fire that burnt up the land. He asked God to forgive the people and God listened. The punishment was stopped.

The vision of a crooked wall/ the plumb line (Amos 7:7 — 9)
Amos saw the Lord standing beside the wall checked it with a plumb line. The wall represented the Israelites. They stopped observing the laws of their covenant with God. God found Israelites disobeying the covenant. God promised to destroy holy places of Israel.
The vision of a basket of ripe fruits (Amos 8:1 — 3)

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

The vision of the destruction of the altar (Amos 9:1 — 4)

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

Teachings of Amos

Social justice and responsibility

There was lack of social justice and responsibility by the king of Israel.

Social justice means dealing with other people fairly. It implies showing concern for the needs of others.

Responsibility means doing one’s duty and fulfilling one’s obligation to God and others.

Oppressions of the poor by the rich

God condemned King Jeroboam’s rule of Israel because of the oppression of the poor, government corruption and bribery of kings and officials. These officials sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals (shoes) i.e. it’s like practising slavery.

The rich trampled on the poor, despised them and placed no value on the poor. The poor gave their garments as security for loan. This was contrary to God’s commandments. The garment was supposed to be returned back to the owner before sunset. The Samaritan women were fat like the well fed cows of Bashan led luxurious lives and were very unkind to the poor.

The rich took an excessive share of the harvest from the farmers. Rulers loved luxury and were arrogant. They loved material things and showed pride in material possessions. They used expensive perfumes.

Corruption and bribery

The judges were corrupt. They accepted bribes. There was a conspiracy between the rich and the judges against the poor.
Pride in materials possessions
The capital city of Israel was Samaria. It was built on a mountain called Bethel, which was also a place of worship. There was prosperity in the land. The Israelites prided themselves in their riches and materials possessions. Amos told them God would destroy their wealth.

Dishonesty
This is telling lies, cheating or using unjust means to get certain things. The wealthy merchants waited impatiently for the end of the holy days so that they could engage in lucrative businesses. They cheated the poor by using false scales.

They sold bad wheat to the poor. They mixed good and bad grains and sold them to unsuspecting people.

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

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

Drunkenness
Israelites did not respect the name of God. They committed sin. They forced Nazirites to drink wine Nazirites were not supposed to drink wine or cut their hair. Israelites did this to show their respect to the Lord.

Hypocritical Religion and Idolatry in Israel
Hypocrisy is pretending to be something different from the person one is. It is also saying one thing, and doing another thing. For example,

Israelites did a lot of religious rites according to the laws of Moses and yet majority of them were unjust, corrupt and oppressed the poor. They observed the external religious activities while their hearts were corrupt and insincere.

Amos condemned Israelites for this hypocrisy, characterized by insincere worship, and mixture of religious beliefs leading to diverse practices of religion i.e. syncretism. This is a combination or mixture of Israelites monotheism and worship of idols and other gods especially Baal, the gods of their neighbours.
Empty sacrifices
The Israelites made elaborate offerings and sacrifices. Yet God was interested only in sincere worship and free will offerings and not mere sacrifices, and tithes. Take away from me the noise of your songs (Amos 5:21 — 23).

Relevance of Amos teachings to Christians today.
The messages of the prophecy of Amos are relevant to Christians today. i

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

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

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

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

iv Wealth. When Israel became wealthy, they departed from the covenant with God.

v Christians should share their wealth with the needy and acquire their wealth justly.

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

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

Gods judgment against Israel and other nations
Amos chapter 1 and 2

Israel.
She committed several crimes, which were condemned by Prophet Amos. Israel committed crimes of injustice, disobedience to God, breaking their covenant with God, idolatry, hypocrisy among other sins mentioned above. Israel was punished for these crimes.

Judah. Their crimes were, failure to obey Gods commands and, despising gods teaching.

Punishments were severe. Israelites would be exiled forcibly and painfully. Earthquakes, famines, fires, oppression from foreign kings, epidemics and divine silence, would destroy their kingdom and holy places.
Syria.
Its capital was Damascus. Syria committed war crimes. The soldiers were excessively cruel in times of war. They murdered their prisoners brutally. For this cruelty,
Their punishment was to be severe. Their palaces would be destroyed by fire and the people would be exiled in Kir.

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

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

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

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

Moab.
The people of Moab; their crime was mishandling the body of the king of Edom. They burned his bones to ashes.
Gods punishment was destruction of the city of Kerioth by divine fire. The people, their rulers and leaders would be killed in battle.
Samaria, Egypt and Ashdod.
Their crime was dishonesty and “filling their mansions with things taken by crime and violence” (Amos 3:10). Women of Samaria committed the crime of drunkenness, oppressing the weak and poor.

The punishment for all these countries is destruction of their land, mansions and army. But a remnant will not go to captivity, and shall not be destroyed. (Amos 3:12)

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

Lessons to learn from Gods judgment of Israel and other nations

Christian's learn that God is:

i Universal,

ii God hates sin

iii God is concerned about the welfare of his people

iv God is merciful and spares a remnant

Israel's Election
Amos 2:9 — 11, 3:1 — 2, 9:7

Election: is an act of choosing a person or group of people for a purpose or action.

Israel's election refers to Gods choice of the Israelites out of the entire human kind to be his people.

God chose them to serve him, be a Holy nation and to be the light of the world. God made a covenant with the Israelites. In the covenant they agreed to live a holy life.

In return, God looked after them. He led them out of Egypt to the wilderness and finally to Canaan. God chose His prophets from the Israelites and raised Nazirites.

Lessons Christians learn from Israel's Election

i Christians are the people of God: The New Israel

ii They are chosen to proclaim the wonderful works of God

iii Christians should not assume that its a guarantee to inherit the kingdom of God like the Israelites believed
iv. They should understand the moral responsibility that goes with elections

v. They have entered into a special covenant with God through His son: Jesus and therefore should implement Jesus teachings

The Remnant and Restoration

Amos 9:8-15

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

Restoration is an act of reinstating things/persons to their former state or position.

Amos informed the Israelites that God was still looking after them, and waiting for their repentance.

The nation of Israel would not be destroyed completely. God would preserve the few righteous ones. He would raise the fallen dynasty of David. People would be restored back to their land to rebuild their cities. There was to be a great harvest and grapes shall overflow.

The relevance of Amos teachings on Remnant and Restoration to Christians today

i. Christians are the selected people of God.

ii. As the chosen ones, they should one, live holy

iii. use their position to serve God and others.

iv. Christians have a moral responsibility to spread God's word,

v. care for the needy and

vi. be the light of the world.

The Day of the Lord.

Amos 5:18-20, 6:3-5, 8:7-13.

In the Old Testament, the day of the Lord is the day that Yahweh would make Israel victorious against other nations.

On this day the Israelite believed that God would establish his rule over and with Israel.

The day of the Lord was also believed to be the day when Israel would be prosperous, would have favour with God, and the just would triumph over the wicked.
The day of the Lord Amos taught that the day of the lord would be a day of severe judgment for sins. It is not a time of happiness, joy or victory. It is a day of darkness, terror, disaster, gloom, wailing, flooding, mourning, defeat, punishment, famine for food and Gods word.

In the New Testament, the day of the Lord is also the Day of Judgment (Parousia).

It is the day of the second coming of Christ everyone will be judged.

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

Lessons Christians learn from Amos teachings on the Day of the Lord

i. Christians believe that it is the day that Christ will come for His bride (the church).

ii. Those who had obeyed the laws of God shall be received by Christ and given the reward of the eternal life.

iii. On that day, Gods kingdom shall be established and Christ will reign forever.
CHAPTER 5

PROPHET JEREMIAH

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

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

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

There was moral degradation. They committed adultery, prostitution, murder, false witness, and corruption.

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

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

Political Background.
Prophet Jeremiah lived in the 7th century BC and prophesied when Judah was ruled by King Josiah, and later his sons Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah; and king Jehoiachin. Judah was conquered and ruled by Assyrians who were conquered by Egyptians who ruled Judah up to 605 BC. Egyptians; were conquered by Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar. This was according to the prophecies of Jeremiah.
The Call of Jeremiah.
Jer 1: 19.

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

Jeremiah was called to be a prophet in 627 B.C during the reign of King Josiah. He received his call in form of a dialogue with Yahweh.

God told him that he had appointed him to be his messenger; even before he was born,

Jeremiah said he was too young and did not know how to speak.

Jeremiah was warned of the hostility he would encounter in his prophetic career. God told him that He would protect him and not to fear.

God touched Jeremiah's mouth. This symbolized that God is the one who shall put words in his mouth.

Jeremiah responded to God's call in faith and obedience.

He was given a message that God was going to bring judgment upon the Kingdom of Judah.

God promised to make him a fortified city, an iron pillar and bronze wall for protection.

He was commanded by God not to marry, neither have children.

During his call, Jeremiah saw two visions.

Jeremiah's visions

A branch of an almond tree

• The tree seemed dead, bare, yet life was in it. This vision meant that that God was watching over Judah to see if they will obey Him.

A pot boiling in the north, and it is about to tip over this way

• The boiling pot tilted away from the north signified that the destroyers of Judah would come from the north.

• The pot was ready to boil over and spill its contents. This meant that Judah was soon going to have trouble. Babylon would pour horrifying disasters on Judah.
Lessons from the call of Jeremiah

i  God has a purpose for each person and He can call anybody to do His work.

ii  He calls the unborn, the young, old, rich, and poor.

iii  God prepares people for His work, through specific experiences

iv  A person who is called to serve God should be ready to meet opposition.

v  God protects His servants and promises to be with them.

vi  Christians should not let their human weakness hinder them from performing their tasks.

vii  Christians should respond to God's call in obedience.

Evils addressed by Jeremiah

Jeremiah 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 23, and 28.

Necromancy.

Other words are divinations, magic, sorcery. Necromancy is the art of seeking hidden knowledge from the mysterious world of spirits: using magic, and divination, which is invoking the dead.

Prophet Jeremiah condemned necromancy, because it was a deception and therefore an evil practice.

This practice polluted the true worship of Yahweh and indicated Israelites lack of faith in God.

By trusting in divination, and magic, the Israelites showed their lack of knowledge of God.

By consulting the mediums, the Israelites disobeyed God (Jer 27:8-10).

Deception and Dishonesty

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

The Israelites were dishonest because they worshiped God and at the same time committed social injustices.

Jeremiah condemned deception. This was because it led to syncretism, and hypocrisy in worship; and breaking down of the covenant way of life.
False prophecy by Hananiah. Jer 28
During the reign of King Zedekiah, Hananiah broke the yoke that Jeremiah was wearing. Hananiah spoke in the name of Yahweh. He lied to the people as he spoke from his imagination and dreams. Jeremiah denounced Hananiah. He predicted and prophesied the death of Hananiah in the same year, and it came to pass.

Jeremiah had also prophesied that the captivity of Judah should be long contrary to Hananiah who said Judah will be exiled for 2 years.

Human sacrifice.
The people offered human sacrifice to idols. The Israelites copied this from the Canaanites.

Human sacrifice was an act of idolatry. It indicated infidelity of the Israelites to God.

It demonstrated Israel's disrespect for the sacred gift of life.

It showed their lack of knowledge of the true nature of Yahweh.

Human sacrifice defiled the land for life is in the blood.

Human sacrifice was a sign of lack of love of God and love for one another.

It is a demonstration of disregard for human life. Only God has the right to take away life.

Idolatry
The Israelites practiced syncretism, which we said was the worship of Yahweh and idols.

The people of Israel were worshipping Baal the Queen of heaven, sun, moon, stars, and also Yahweh (Jer 8:2).

Idols were placed even in Yahweh's sacred places. The temple was defiled by idols.

Jeremiah condemned it. (Jer 2: 11-13).

Why did Jeremiah condemn idolatry?

- It defiled people and was a sign of lack of faith in Yahweh.
- It defiled the land. Idolatry led to divine judgment and punishment.
- By worshipping idols Judah broke the covenant and their relationship with God.
- There is only one true living God to be worshipped and obeyed.
False sense of security
People of Judah trusted that the temple was secure, holy and cannot be destroyed. Jeremiah denounced this false belief about the temple.
He warned them that God would destroy the temple because of the many evils committed in it.

The temple sermon
Jer 7:1-8:1-3
God commanded prophet Jeremiah to speak in the temple in response to the people of Israel to stop idolatry and other social evils.
At the gate to the temple, Jeremiah proclaimed that the people of Judah had to change their way of life and stick to the covenant they made with God.
They had to stop defiling the temple of placing idols in it.
They had to stop committing social injustices and as murderer/exploitation of the weak, orphans, widows and foreigners.
The practice of human sacrifice was murder and displeasing to God.
Hypocrisy was bad.
The Israelites believed that the temple was secure from destruction because of its holiness was not true.
God would destroy Israelites/Jerusalem through invasion of a foreign nation.
If the people stopped their evil ways, God would not bring judgement upon them.
God would destroy the temple of Jerusalem and send the people to exile.

The Relevance of Jeremiah’s teachings to Christians today.
i Christians are called to preach God’s gospel as Jeremiah did.
ii Christians should accept suffering like Jeremiah did.
iii They should learn to distinguish between false and true prophets.
iv Like Jeremiah, they should condemn evil in society.
v They have a duty to call people to repentance as Jeremiah did.
vi They should be good examples to the people by living, holy and upright lives as Jeremiah
People should be able to know the nature of God through the lives of Christians.
CHAPTER 6

JEREMIAH’S TEACHINGS ON JUDGMENT AND PUNISHMENT


Punishment is a penalty, for an offence or a crime committed.

The purpose for God’s judgement is to correct the Israelites

Symbolic acts of Jeremiah related to judgement and punishment

The Linen Waist Cloth. Jer. 13

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

Significance.

It symbolized Israel’s holiness. The unwashed cloth represented Judah’s sinful pride. Israel used to cling close to God but now Israel / Judah were spoilt, rebellious, arrogant and pursued foreign gods.

God was going to destroy them if they did not repent. The spoilt linen waistcloth was a symbol for future God’s action.

Jeremiah’s personal Life. Jer 16.

His life was a symbolic act. He was told not to marry, have children, nor attend funerals, social gatherings, feasts and wedding parties.

Significance.

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

Jeremiah’s loneliness signified the perishing of families through the sword, famine and disease. It would be a time of terror for the families of Judah.

Their normal social life of feasting, merry making would come to an end. There would be no weddings and no one to bury the dead. Hence Jeremiah was forbidden from mourning for the dead.
Jeremiah was told to go to a potters house. He found the potter making a clay vessel. Whenever a piece of pottery turned out imperfect, he would take the clay and make it into something else. The potter made a better pot, more perfect vessel than the spoiled one.

**Significance.**

God is the potter. People of Judah are the clay. As the potter destroyed a vessel, God intended to destroy Judah because of their wickedness and mould those who repented into better people.

God was going to shape them into faithful people. God's judgement was to be a corrective punishment.

**The broken clay Jar. Jer. 19.**

i. God told Jeremiah to buy a clay flask. He then took some elders and priests to the valley of Hinnon. He delivered a sermon condemning the people of Judah for their idolatry and other evils.

Jeremiah then broke the clay jar in their presence and announced to them that Yahweh would destroy Jerusalem and Judah as Jeremiah had destroyed the jar.

**Significance.**

The kings, priests and prophets of Judah would be shattered like the clay flask because of their sins. Since, they brutally sacrificed their children; they are to suffer horrifying experiences at the hand of their enemies.

They shall suffer starvation and turn into cannibals; eating their own children and neighbours.

Broken pieces of a clay pot cannot be moulded. No one was to escape judgment.

However, there is hope after punishment.

**Two Baskets of Figs Jer. 24.**

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

**Significance.**

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

**Jeremiah Wears an Ox Yoke. Jer. 27.**

Jeremiah was instructed by God to make for himself a yoke out of leather straps and wooden crossbars and to wear it around his neck.

Jeremiah moved around in the yoke for quite some time in public. He was also given a message for ambassadors of kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon, who were coming to see King Zedekiah in Jerusalem.

They were to give God's message to their kings.

Any nation that accepted this message shall not suffer; but if any nation will not submit to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia rule, God will punish that nation by war, starvation and disease.

Jer 27:6-8.

The message for King Zedekiah was to surrender to the Babylonian rule and live, if he resists he would perish.

**Significance.**

The yoke represented the Babylonians rule. Nebuchadnezzar was used by God to bring judgment to all nations. Yahweh is a universal God and his judgment is universal.
CHAPTER 7

JEREMIAHS TEACHINGS, SUFFERING AND HOPE

The sufferings and lamentations of Jeremiah
Jer 11, 12, 17:14 — 18, 18:18- 23, 20: 1 — 6, 27, 37, and 38.

Jeremiah sufferings were experiences that were painful; physically and emotionally.
In suffering there is loss and grief.

Lamentations are strong emotional expressions of pain and grief. Jeremiah suffered in
the following ways

i  Rejection by his own family and relatives. This grieved Jeremiah.

ii  Anathoth planned to kill him but God protected Jeremiah and pronounced judgment
upon him

iii  Jeremiah suffered when he was accused falsely. He was accused of blasphemy
after the temple sermon.

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

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

vi  Jeremiah suffered loneliness and solitude. He was not married and did not attend
social gatherings and celebrations. This made Jeremiah lonely

vii  Jeremiah prohervying judgment caused him emotional pain and agony. His
messages were mainly of severe judgment and punishment.

viii  He felt frustrations, doubts, self-pity and despair. He wondered why God made him
suffer.

ix  Jeremiah suffered physical assault, imprisonment and an attempt on his life.
Pashhur, the chief temple priest ordered beating and chaining of Jeremiah to the
temple gate.

x  Jeremiah was thrown in a muddy cistern. Here he was rescued by Ebed-melech an
Ethiopian Eunuch.
Relevance of the suffering and lamentations of Jeremiah to Christians today

i  Christians learn to be ready to face opposition and rejection for the sake of the gospel.

ii  Christians should be prepared to suffer persecution for the Lord.

iii  Christians should be ready to make sacrifices for the sake of God.

iv  Be ready to lead humble lives.

v  Jeremiah's open confessions to God encourage Christians to be open to God.

vi  Christians should let God avenge for them their enemies just like Jeremiah prayed

vii  Christians should not lose hope in times of difficulty.

viii  Christians learn that tribulations strengthen their faith.

ix  Christians should learn to deal with negative emotions such as self-pity, grief and trust God.

x  Jeremiah was told by God to repent of his negative utterances. Christians should do the same as they are assured of divine security and protection against their persecutors.

Jeremiah's teachings on hope and restoration

Symbolic acts related to hope and restoration.

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

The symbolic acts were:

Vision of 2 baskets of figs.
Refer to the symbolic act related to judgment.

Jeremiah buying a field.
God instructed Jeremiah to buy a field from his cousin Hanamel of Anathoth.
  Jeremiah bought the field for 17 cents of silver. He then handed the title deed and open copy to Baruch to keep

Jeremiah prophesied the restoration of the exiles to their homeland.

The significance of this symbolic act is the assurance of restoration of Judah and Israel after suffering. People will be restored to their homeland.
of Judah would reconstruct their homes, cultivate their land, and own property (Jer 32; 1 -15).

Jeremiah letter to the Jews in Babylon
Jeremiah wrote to the people of Judah a letter of encouragement while in exile. The contents of the letter included:
- They were to settle down, build houses,
- Marry and have children,
- Live in peace with the Babylonians.
- They were to pray for the welfare of their masters
- Ignore false prophets who lied to them about the safety of Jerusalem
- God would restore them back to their land after 70 years of exile were over.
- The exiles were to trust in God and not give up (Jer.29).

A wooden ox yoke.
The yoke represented captivity and suffering of Jews in exile. It was also a sign of hope if the people of Judah were willing to submit to the Babylonian rule.

God would restore them back to their land. Their yoke would be broken and they would be set free.

Visit to the porters house
Refer to the symbolic act related to judgment.

Jeremiah's teaching about the new covenant
Jer 23:5-6, 30-33
Jeremiah taught that the new covenant was to be written in peoples hearts.
The covenant was to be made between God and the remnant community after exile.
The people were to have a personal knowledge of God in the new covenant.
God was to forgive their sin and remember them no more.
Each individual was responsible for his own sins.
The new covenant was to be initiated by God.
The new covenant was to last forever.
It was as a result in the emergence of a new people of God or new Israel.
The fall of Jerusalem and the exile of the Israelites
Jer.39

Jeremiahs prophecy came to pass. Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in the ninth year of King Zedekiah in 587BC.

The Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and seized it. King Zedekiah fled but; he was captured by the Babylonians army. He witnessed the execution of his sons. His eyes were gauged out. He was then taken in chains to captivity in Babylon.

Solomons temple was looted and destroyed. Villages, Jerusalem and the palace were destroyed and burnt down.

The priests, court officials, army officials, people in the upper class, craftsmen were executed. City people were taken to Babylon as captives. The poor, aged and a few people were left behind and given vineyards to farm.

Nebuchadnezzars army was brutal to the Israelites. Many Israelites were killed.

Judah became a province of Babylon. Gedaliah was appointed governor of Judah.

He stayed at Mizpah, the headquarters of Judah. Ishmael killed Gedaliah.

Later Jeremiah was forced to go to Egypt by the Israelites. Jeremiah died in Egypt, an old man, and still faithful to his call.

Relating the teachings of Jeremiah to the New Testament and Christian life today

i Jeremiah was rejected by his; relatives, friends and the Israelites.

• In the New Testament, Jesus was rejected in his hometown of Nazareth: and by the religious leaders of Israel.

• Jeremiah compared himself to a lamb being led to the slaughter. Jesus in the New Testament is referred to as a lamb led to the slaughter.

ii Jeremiah's suffering symbolizes divine judgment over Judah.

• However, Jesus sufferings were to bring salvation to all mankind.

• Both Jeremiah and Jesus experienced spiritual agony. Jeremiah experience agony and felt left alone by God. Jesus too felt agony when praying in the garden of Gethsemane and when on the cross.

iii Jeremiah taught that God is universal and a just judge.
The gospel of Jesus is universal and everybody is judged according to his or her faith in God. Jeremiah and Jesus accused the Israelites of turning the temple into a “den of robbers”.

Jeremiah and Jesus were both accused of blasphemy. Both challenged false beliefs about the temple. Both Jeremiah and Jesus spoke of the coming judgment of God.

The new covenant was fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah spoke of hope and restoration.


Relationship of Jeremiah’s teaching to Christian today.

i. Christians are to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

ii. They are empowered by the Holy Spirit to endure suffering and to grow spiritually.

iii. Christians like Jeremiah face false prophets who speak in Jesus name.

iv. Christians are to be watchful and obey Yahweh.

v. Like Jeremiah Christians should call people to repentance.

vi. The new covenant is fulfilled in Christians individual relationship with God.

vii. Christians are the new people, the new Israel as prophesied by Jeremiah.

viii. His teachings reveal that God is universal. Christians are from all corners of the earth.

ix. Christians should prepare for judgment by practicing love, righteousness, and faith in God.
CHAPTER 8

PROPHET NEHEMIAH

Background to Nehemiah

Political and historical background.

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

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

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

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

Social background

The Jews in foreign lands retained their Jewish way of life. The land of Israel was partly occupied by foreigners.

The foreign cultures of neighbouring rulers influenced Israelites who returned. They for example, intermarried with foreigners, a custom that God did not allow. Israelites were not to intermarry with other people according to the Mosaic Law. In spite of this however, Jews maintained their separated identity.

Some of the foreigners despised Jews. The wealthy Jews oppressed the poor Jews. In Jerusalem there was starvation. Nehemiah condemned oppression of the poor.

Religious background

Jews returned to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem and the altar of God for sacrifices.

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

Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls. The temple of Jerusalem was rebuilt, cleared and dedicated to God.

Prayers by Nehemiah

Occasions when Nehemiah prayed to the Lord.

i  When he learnt about the suffering of Jews who remained in Judah and the ruined state of Jerusalem; He prayed for forgiveness on behalf of his people (Neh.4: 1 — 11).

ii  Making a request to King Artaxerxes to be permitted to return to Judah Neh.2: 4

iii  When his enemies ridiculed the Jews and planned to discourage them from rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Tobiah Nehemiah requested God to punish the enemies who were mocking temple builders Neh.4:4 — 5.

iv  When he learnt that his enemies were conspiring to attack Jerusalem to stop the construction work, he prayed and organised people to provide a guard of the wall Neh.4: 7 — 9.

v  For his good work, he prayed for his works Neh 5:19.

vi  When his enemies plotted to destroy him, he prayed God for strength and courage to overcome his enemies Neh 6: 19.

vii  When Shemaiah attempted to frighten him to hide in the temple claiming that there was a plot to kill him, Nehemiah prayed and asked God to punish his enemies Neh 6:14.

viii  When he organized contributions for Levites and musicians; and people to distribute them. He asked God to remember his work for the house of God Neh 13:14.

ix  He stopped trade on the Sabbath day, and organised rest on the day. He warned traders against violating the Sabbath law. He asked Lord to remember him for these actions Neh.13: 22.

x  Nehemiah prayed for punishment of the son of Joiada. The son of Joiada had brought disgrace to the priesthood by marrying a foreigner, the daughter of Sanballat from the town of Beth Horon, Neh 13:29.

xi  After cleansing the Israelites of foreign influence, he forbade mixed marriages


xii He prepared duty regulations for priests and Levites. He allocated them duties. He then organized Jews to bring offerings for maintaining priests and Levites.

xiii He prayed God to remember his work for the temple, priests and Levites Neh 13:31

Importance of prayer in Christian life
Through prayer, Christians;
i Christians express their faith in God and praise God for his greatness, goodness, holiness,

ii Christians closer to God; it strengthens their relationship with God.

iii Christians request for their needs, blessings, success, good health, and protection

iv Prayers help Christians to listen to God and to seek His will.

v It gives Christians courage to face and overcome life's challenges.

vi Christians seek guidance, comfort and support in times of trials.

vii Christians intercede for the sick, poor, hungry, prisoners, friends, family and community.

viii The communal/public prayers unite Christians together.

ix Christians ask for forgiveness and the ability to forgive others. In prayers, Christians trust that God listens and answers their prayers.

Leadership qualities of Nehemiah

- God fearing man. Nehemiah feared God, relied and depended on God.

- Prayerfulness — he prayed constantly before and after making decisions.

- Courageous — He displayed courage even when his life was in danger

- Hard work and commitment. He was dedicated to the rebuilding of the wall of the temple and Jerusalem.

- Team spirit — he was a team leader, motivating people to work.

- He had planning and organizational skills

- He was visionary

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

- He was patriotic loved his country

- Wisdom. He made wise decisions at the right time.
• He led by example, a role model
• He was honest and sincere in his prayers
• He was shrewd and impartial
• He was decisive. He told God about decisions he had made and asked for their recognition.
• He was humble. He asked to be allowed to return to Jerusalem and oversee the repair of its wall and temple.
• He believed in law and punishment of wrongdoers. He asked God to punish lawbreakers especially Jews who married foreigners.

Relevance of Nehemiah's leadership to Christians today

Christians should copy all the leadership qualities of Nehemiah.

They should trust in God and seek his guidance in all their activities and needs.

1. Christians should live a life of prayer
2. Christians should be courageous, be ready to defend the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. Christians should be dedicated to their work. Work diligently and honestly
4. Christians should set realistic goals and organize their activities.
5. Christians should seek wisdom from God to be able to choose appropriate
6. Christians should care for the needy and be compassionate to all
7. Christians should be patriotic and ready to defend their country against
8. Christians should need to fight for the rights of the helpless children, widows etc.
9. Christians should seek God first, view themselves as servants of God and be good role models.
Building the wall of Jerusalem
Nehemiah 2:9-7

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

The rebuilt wall had several gates with different names. The gates were the entrances to Jerusalem. Their names were Dung gate, Potsherd gate, Fountain gate, Water gate, Horse gate, East gate, Sheep gate, Fish gate, Watch gate and Ephraim gate.

Problems faced by Nehemiah
1. When Nehemiah was building the wall of Jerusalem, he faced many challenges.
2. There was lack of cooperation by the nobles of Tekoa.
3. Nehemiah faced opposition from enemies such as Sanballat, and Tobiah, the Arab who tried to thwart the progress of Nehemiahs work.
4. As he built Jerusalem, the rich oppressed the poor.
5. The priests misused the temple and the offerings.
6. The Levites were not getting their share of the offerings and the Sabbath was violated.
7. There was laxity in observance of the Sabbath. because Sabbath day should be kept holy.
8. There was a lot of foreign influence e.g. intermarriages
9. Nehemiah received death threats.

Relevance of Nehemiahs experience to Christians today
i  Christians should expect opposition, as did Nehemiah.
ii They should not be afraid of being ridiculed, mocked and despised.
iii Christians should persevere in Gods work.
iv They should put their trust in God like Nehemiah did.
v They should also fight for the welfare of the disadvantaged groups and not exploit them.
vi They have a moral obligation to condemn injustice in the society
vii They should be in the forefront fighting HIV/ AIDS and drug abuse.
viii Christians should not be influenced by evils that may corrupt morals of the society
They should learn that leadership involves suffering, persecution, and sacrifices.
CHAPTER 9

RESTORATION OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Renewal of the covenant
Neh 7-13

Stages of the renewal of the covenant.

Israelites were the chosen people of God. They had suffered many hardships.

There was therefore a need for the renewal of the covenant between God and Israelites.

The ceremony to renew the covenant was held in Jerusalem and was led by Ezra, the Levites and other religious leaders.

The renewal of the covenant can be discussed in 3 main stages:

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

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

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

Ezra reads the Law
Neh 7:72-8:12

Ezras prayer closed the celebrations. In his prayer, he recalled Gods acts of creation.

He then recounted the history of the Israelites. He mentioned the previous acts of God; where the Lord had demonstrated His love and mercy for the Israelites.

He then confessed the sins of their ancestors and the present Israelites. These were the sins of rebellion and disobedience.
Agreement of the people
Neh 10:1-28

Israelites promised God that they would

i  Live according to Gods law, by obeying all his commands and requirements

ii  Stop intermarrying with foreigners living in their land.

iii  Cancel debts every 7th year

iv  Contribute annually towards the temple expenses to ensure that the house of God
   was not neglected.

v  Provide sacrifices and offerings for the temple and arrange for provision of wood for
   burnt sacrifices according to the law.

vi  Offer first fruits of their harvest and dedicate the first born and flocks as required by
    the law.

vii  Pay for their tithes as required by the law.

Lessons learnt from the renewal of the covenant

i  God is good, loving, merciful, and faithful to his promises. God forgives all people and
   we are all sinners.

ii  We fail in our moral obligation to God and to one another.

iii  Since we are sinners, we should repent our sins and strive to live according to Gods
     law.

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

Dedication of the wall of Jerusalem
Neh. 12:27 — 47

The rebuilt wall was dedicated to God. The wall restored security and prestige of
Gods people. The wall of Jerusalem was set-aside for God in a solemn ceremony.
There was a dedication ceremony in which people sung with symbols, harps, lyres,
trumpets and other instruments. The priests and Levites purified themselves.

The people led by Ezra, Nehemiah, the priests and other leaders of Judah walked
around the wall. They divided themselves into two groups. One group walked from
the right side and the
Final reforms of Nehemiah

Nehemiah carried out during his stay in Judah, where he was the governor (Neh 5:14).

The major reforms were

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

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

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

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

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

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

Comparing teachings of Nehemiah and St. Lukes Gospel

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

ii Nehemiah fasted, St. Lukes gospel records that Jesus fasted.

iii Nehemiah prayed for forgiveness of sinful Jews. Jesus in St. Lukes gospel being a leader who prayed for the forgiveness of his enemies.

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

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

Nehemiah cleansed the temple of traders so did Jesus.

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

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

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

Relating Nehemiah's teachings to Christian life today

- Prayers and fasting are fundamental to Christians just like they were to Nehemiah
- Nehemiah's example teaches Christians to face all forms of opposition with courage, wisdom, and firmness.
- Nehemiah cared for the needy. Christians should learn to give spiritual food, physical food and clothing to the needy, orphans, widows.
- As Nehemiah renewed the covenant, Christians should seek spiritual renewal publicly and privately. They should seek for communal as well as individual forgiveness.
- Nehemiah cleansing the temple. Christians should learn to use the church buildings and contributions rightly
- Nehemiah was guided by the Law of Moses and land just like Christians are guided by the scriptures (Bible) and the law of the nation.