

CLASS: SS2

SUBJECT: CRS

TOPIC: CONCERN FOR ONE'S NATION II

WEEK: 2

TERM: THIRD

NOTE: Make sure you have read 'Concern for the Nation I' for better understanding of this lesson. If not, refer to it – Week 9, 2nd term.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE NATION IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION (Ezra 4; 5:1-2; 6:13-22; Neh. 4:1-23)

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah have different account of the opposition to the efforts of Nehemiah, Zerubbabel and Ezra to rebuilding Jerusalem after its destruction and ruins. However, both books point to the discouragement and frustration the builders faced from the enemies to hindering the completion of the works they started.

In Ezra, the **Samaritans and some half Jews who were Israel's enemies** heard that the returned groups were building a temple to the Lord, they asked for permission to participate in the scheme. The request of the band of evil agitators was turned down by Zerubbabel on behalf of the chiefs of Israel. He told them publicly that they had no legitimate right to partner with the Jews in building the temple. These adversaries, the opposition group then resorted to the use of professional petition writers and cheap blackmail to sustain their evil and wicked plot to stop the temple work. In one of the petitions sent to king **Artaxerxes by Bislam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest** of their accomplice, they convinced the king who went through records and confirmed the allegation that Jerusalem had been a flash point for political agitation and civil unrest; if the Jews were allowed to finish rebuilding the walls and foundation of the city of Jerusalem, they would not pay tribute, custom or toll and that would affect the royal revenue. As a result, the king issued a decree and stopped the work on the temple in Jerusalem temporarily.

The work of the building the Temple resumed after the prophecy of **Haggai** and **Zachariah**, who prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the Lord. Again the enemies of the Jews (**Tattenai the governor and**

Shetharbozenai) intended to stop the work by writing to the King **Darius**. King Darius after checking the records confirmed that a decree was issued by King Cyrus for the rebuilding of a Temple to the God of the Jews. Then he gave the Jews permission to resume the work which was eventually completed and dedicated with pomp and pageantry by the Jews.

In the book of Nehemiah the Jews were threatened by an opposition group led by Sanballat who in the presence of his people and the Samaritans ridiculed the Jews by describing them **as feeble-minded who engaged themselves in an impossible task**. Tobiah the Ammonite said that the **wall** the Jews are rebuilding was so **fragile that if a fox would go on it, it would crumble**. Nehemiah, instead of engaging his enemies in verbal battle, prayed to God to judge them for ridiculing, despising and taunting His people. As the work progressed, the enemies, among who are: Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites got angry and planned secretly to attack the Jews at work to create confusion and disorganize them. When Nehemiah knew of the plot, he prayed to God and mounted protective guards with swords, spears and bows against their enemies day and night.

God frustrated the evil plans of the enemies and the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt eventually under the divine inspiration and concerned leadership of Nehemiah.

HOW WE CAN SHOW CONCERN TO OUR NATION-NIGERIA

1. To ensure the presence of peace, progress and economic development and advancement in the nation, every citizen, politicians and political office holders should not abuse their civic responsibility to the nation.
2. Every authority in Nigeria and the responsibility attached to it belong to God hence we should respect and honour the authority set over us. We are to be law abiding no matter who and what we are.
3. As Nigerian citizens, we have the responsibility of paying taxes, rates, levies, electricity, water and other utility bills promptly.
4. Anyone holding top public office of authority should use the position to be agent of positive economic and social development of the country.

5. We should participate in public enlightenment campaigns toward eradicating social ills like cultism, examination malpractices and illiteracy, the spread of communicable diseases, drug addition, homosexuality etc.
6. We should avoid gossip and rumour mongering.
7. We should not vandalize government property.
8. We should refrain from nepotism, favouritism, tribalism, and being religious fanatics.
9. We should not use his position of authority to compromise state security and anti-social behaviour.
10. We should champion the inculcation of good work ethics and morals as vehicles of re-awakening the mind.
11. We should join to salvage the situation wherever there is crisis in the nation.

ASSIGNMENT

List the enemies of the Jews in this lesson

CLASS: SS2

SUBJECT: CRS

TOPIC: THE SUPREMACY OF GOD

WEEK: 3

TERM: THIRD

CONTENT

1. The Stories of Elijah and Obadiah (I Kings 16:29-34; 17:1-7; 18:1-19; 19:1-18)
2. Elijah Meets King Ahab and Throws a Challenge (I Kings 18:1-19)
3. The Contest on Mount Carmel (I Kings 18:20-46; I Sam. 5:1-12)

ELIJAH AND OBADIAH

(I Kings 16:29-34; 17:1-7; 18:1-19; 19:1-18)

Ahab served as king in Israel who took over from Omri. The kingdom of Israel was made up of ten tribes. During Ahab's reign, Elijah was the prophet of God. Ahab was thriving in his evil deed as the Bible recorded that he did evil more than all the kings that ever ruled before him. He worshipped graven images, erected and built a house for **Baal in Samaria**, made grooves round Baal's temple where evils were concealed.

In the midst of all these evils, there was a man serving under King Ahab but kept his faith in God and maintained his stand for God. His name was **Obadiah**.

Elijah went to the king and proclaimed a prophecy of drought in the land. Elijah was told by God to hide himself by the **brook Cherith** where he was fed by **ravens** until the brook dried up. Elijah proceeds to the **widow at Zarephath** who sustained him after the dried brook.

After three and half years, God told Elijah to show himself to Ahab, which coincided with the time Ahab and Obadiah parted ways to look for grass for horses and mules to eat.

Obadiah saw Elijah and immediately recognized him. Elijah then sent him to inform Ahab of his presence but Obadiah objected stating Elijah might disappear before his master arrives which may lead to his death. Elijah promised to show himself to the king. When they both met, Ahab asked Elijah rudely *"Is it you, you troubler of Israel?"* Elijah replied that he is not but Ahab and his father's house.

Elijah then request the king to gather the people of Israel at Mount Carmel, **four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of Asherah** to the mountain for a contest to prove who is to be worshipped, Yahweh or Baal.

ELIJAH MEETS KING AHAB AND THROWS A CHALLENGE

(I Kings 18:1-19)

God is a spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and truth as the highest, greatest, the ultimate Being above all other gods. He is ever ready to provide us with solutions in the most difficult times and problems. God's supremacy was evident during the reign of King Ahab who imposed the pagan (bad) worship on the people of Israel which gave rise to religious crises.

Ahab is described as the king who did evil in the sight of God more than all before him. This was consequent to his marriage to the Sidonian princess- Jezebel who contaminated Israel with the worship of Baal, to the extent that the worship of true God was almost forgotten and overthrown. Jezebel waxed stronger with no respect or regards for the God of Israel. She was killing the prophets of God recklessly and chasing others into hiding in order to enforce Baal worship in the midst of persecution. Obadiah the officer in charge of King Ahab's household had to hide hundreds of those prophets of God in fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water, morning and evening.

As the situation persisted, God had to send Elijah to Israel (Ahab) to proclaim a 3½ years drought in Israel as punishment for abandoning their true God. Elijah was divinely directed to stay where God provided for him away from the reach of Ahab and Jezebel. First, in the Brook Cherith where he drank from the brook as the ravens fed him with bread and meat.

The drought affected the land so much that the king Ahab himself with Obadiah had to go in search of green pasture for the animals. The drought was partly as punishment to Israel for their idolatrous practice and partly to show God's supremacy over Baal and prove that He is the owner and the controller of everything. He withheld rain for 3½ years, made provision for Elijah and used Obadiah to protect and feed His prophets throughout the duration of the drought. When Ahab eventually met with Elijah through Obadiah, Elijah challenged him to gather all the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel. This challenge and gathering of the prophets of Baal led to the **contest on Mount Carmel**.

THE CONTEST ON MOUNT CARMEL

(I Kings 18:20-46; I Sam. 5:1-12)

God, being merciful and just decided to end the suffering through the contest on Mount Carmel; where He proved His supremacy through Prophet Elijah.

Elijah directed Ahab to gather on Mount Carmel the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and all the Israelites for the contest. Elijah ordered that two bulls be provided; and

each would be offered to God and Baal; and the one that would answer by fire would prove to be the true and supreme God. The prophets of Baal were the first to offer a bull to their god, Baal. They prayed, cried and bruised (cut) themselves from morning till evening calling on their god, but no fire came. Their god did not answer; the bull they prepared remained on the altar unconsumed.

As Elijah's turn to call on his God came, he re-prepared the altar with twelve stones according to the twelve tribes of Israel. He cut the bull in pieces and placed the bull with the wood on the altar and dug a trench round about. He then directed the people to pour four jars of water on the burnt offering three times repeatedly and the trench was filled up. Elijah called on God to send down fire to consume the burnt offering to prove himself as God in Israel, to prove him (Elijah) as His true servant. Immediately, the fire of the Lord fell from heaven and consumed: the burnt offering; the wood; the stones; and dried even in the water in the trench. The prophets of Baal were filled with awe. Seeing what happened, the people fell on their faces and confessed "The Lord, He is God, The Lord, He is God". Their faith in God as the true supreme God was restored.

As a result of this development, Elijah ordered the killing of all the prophets of Baal and they were killed at the brook, Kishon. After the contest, Elijah announced the coming of rain to mark the end of the drought and he went to the top of Mount Carmel and prayed and God answered with a heavy rainfall. Thus Elijah demonstrated the supremacy of God over all false gods.

An instance of the demonstration of God's supremacy is in the case of Dagon and the ark of the Lord. God demonstrated His supremacy over Dagon, the god of the Philistines fall down on its face before the Ark of the Lord, and had its hands and head cut off from the trunk when the Ark of the Lord was brought to the house Dagon (I Samuel 5:1-12).

ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Write a short note on Obadiah.
- 2) Explain how Dagon, the god of the Philistines fall down on its face and other gods destroyed before the Ark of the Lord.

CLASS: SS2
SUBJECT: CRS
TOPIC: FAITH IN GOD
WEEK: 4
TERM: THIRD

CONTENT

1. The Command to Worship King Nebuchadnezzar's Image (Daniel 3:1-7)
2. The Refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to Worship the King's Image (Daniel 3:8-18)
3. Punishment for Refusal and God's Deliverance (Daniel 3:19-28)
4. The Effects of their Faith and Courage on the People – Babylonians and Jews (Daniel 3:29)

THE COMMAND TO WORSHIP KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S IMAGE (Daniel 3:1-7)

Faith is the bedrock and foundation on which the Christian religion is built. Faith is an absolute trust in God and His power in spite of unfavourable situations. It is man's personal conviction and trust in God arising from a direct personal relationship with God.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah was their Hebrew names respectively) were young Hebrew men who had faith and confidence in God even while they were in captivity in Babylon. They dedicated themselves to the worship of God and a strict observance of God's ordinances and statutes. Their virtues, qualities and their excellence in the special school of the Chaldeans earned them appointment as officials in the Babylonian kingdom. It happened that the king (Nebuchadnezzar) made a golden image which he set up in the **plain of Dura** in the province of **Babylon**. He invited all the principal officers of the province for the dedication ceremony. He ordered the people regardless of language or nationality to fall down and worship the image as soon as they heard the sounds of musical instruments played. He had clearly stated the punishment for flouting the order which was that, the offender would be thrown into a burning fiery furnace. All the people in his domain complied with the provision of the king's decree by worshipping the image, except the three young men.

THE REFUSAL OF SHEDRACH, MESHACH AND ABEDNEGO TO WORSHIP THE KING'S IMAGE (Daniel 3:8-18)

The people in king Nebuchadnezzar's domain complied with the king's order accordingly except Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (the three Hebrew young men). **The Chaldeans** went to the king and reminded him of the content of his decree regarding worship of the image. Then they maliciously reported to the king that certain Jews, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were officers appointed over the affairs of Babylon neither obeyed the king, nor served his god, nor worshipped the image set up by him.

On hearing these reports, Nebuchadnezzar angrily ordered that the three Hebrew faithful servants of God be summoned before him to find out whether the allegation was true. On finding out from them that the allegations were true, he proposed to give them "soft landing" if they would comply and worship the image. But Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego openly refused to worship the image or serve the king's god. They pointed out to the king without reservation that their God whom they serve would deliver them from the burning fiery furnace and from him the king.

PUNISHMENT FOR REFUSAL AND GOD'S DELIVERANCE (Daniel 3:19-28)

The response of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego greatly angered the king and the expression on his face changed against them. He ordered the fiery furnace to be heated **seven times** more than its normal heat. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were then bound by mighty men of the king's army and cast into the overheated burning fiery furnace. The furnace was so hot that the flames killed those men who cast the three Hebrew young men into the furnace.

The king together with everybody was surprised when they saw four men walking in the midst of the fire unhurt. Nebuchadnezzar immediately asked his counsellors:

"Do we not cast three men bound into the fire? ... "But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods" Dan.3:24, 25.

He came near the burning fiery furnace and called “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the servants of the Most High God, come forth, come out here”. When they came out, the officers of the province and the king inspected them and discovered that the fire had no single effect on them. The expression of boldness, courage and faith by these three Hebrew young men demonstrated to king Nebuchadnezzar, picture of God by saying,

“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who had sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him and set at naught the kings’ command and yielded their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God”. (Daniel 3:28)

THE EFFECTS OF THEIR FAITH AND COURAGE ON THE PEOPLE – BABYLONIANS AND JEWS

(Daniel 3:29)

Having recognised the supremacy and power of God through the miraculous deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Nebuchadnezzar therefore promulgated a new decree which made it unlawful for any person, nation or language to speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Anybody who did so would be destroyed with his household. He declared, “There is no other god who is able to deliver in this way, as the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego”. He then promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain how the faith of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were tested in Babylon.
2. Give two examples of cultural practices which are contrary to the Christian faith in your society.

CLASS: SS2
SUBJECT: CRS
TOPIC: FAITH AND POWER OF GOD
WEEK: 5
TERM: THIRD

CONTENT

1. A Decree to Worship the King (Daniel 6:1-9)
2. Daniel Expresses His Faith in God (Daniel 6:10-15)
3. Daniel in the Lion's Den (Daniel 6:11-18)
4. The Power of God Manifested (Daniel 6:19-24)
5. Effects of Daniel's Faith (Daniel 6:19-24)
6. Qualities of Daniel (Daniel 1:3-8; 6:3-5; 10:16; 6:22-23)

A DECREE TO WORSHIP THE KING (Daniel 6:1-9)

Daniel was one of the Jewish captives taken to Babylon. While in Babylon, his faithfulness, honesty and peculiar divine endowment made him to progress in that foreign land.

King Darius had divided his kingdom into **one hundred and twenty provinces** for administrative convenience. Each of these provinces was headed by a **Satrap** (i.e. a governor). He further appointed three presidents to oversee these Satraps. Daniel happened to be one of the three presidents. He distinguished himself and became popular in the kingdom and the most favoured of the three presidents because he was filled with an excellent spirit. The king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. This move by the king attracted jealousy and hatred against Daniel from the other presidents and Satraps hence they sought ways of bringing him into disrepute before the king, so as to bring his downfall. When they could not find grounds to bring about his fall, they decided to use his religion to establish an offence against him before the king because they knew well that Daniel loved God and served Him continually.

The conspirators (the other two presidents and the officers in the land) went to the king, persuading him to establish a law which would cause an offence to pray to any other god or man other than the king, for a period of thirty days. The penalty for such offence was to cast the person into the Den of lions. They further requested the king to make the law, not subject to change, in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians.

Daniel disregarded the law and prayed in his house three times a day, as was his practice, giving thanks to the Almighty God.

DANIEL EXPRESSES HIS FAITH IN GOD (Daniel 6:10-15)

After learning that the document had been signed by the king, Daniel went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber opened towards Jerusalem and prayed to God **three times every day**. The men who wanted to implicate him came and found Daniel praying to his God and immediately reported him to the king. They further reminded the king that his law concerning worship was not subject to change, implying that the punishment must be strictly inflicted on Daniel.

DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN (Daniel 6:11-18)

When king Darius heard of Daniel's violation of his decree on worship, he was greatly worried. He was reluctant to inflict the harsh punishment of the law on Daniel. He tried to free him but following the persuasion of the other officers of the land, especially those who hated Daniel, that the law of **Medes and Persians was unchangeable** and must be applied accordingly, the king ordered that Daniel be cast into the den of lions.

However, the king said to Daniel, *"May your God whom you serve continually deliver you"*. The king having acted against his wish went back home, fasted and was without sleep due to his unhappiness over what had happened to Daniel.

THE POWER OF GOD MANIFESTED (Daniel 6:19-24)

The next day, as early as possible, the king hurried to the Den of lions. He wanted to see whether Daniel was dead or alive. When he came near the Den, he cried with a loud voice *"Daniel, servant of the Living God, has your God whom you serve continually been able to deliver you from the lion?"* Daniel greeted the king and informed him that the Lord sent His Angel to close the mouth of the lions because he was blameless before God and before the king. The king was very happy when he found out that Daniel was alive, he immediately ordered that he be brought out of the den. When he was brought out, he was found unhurt. The king being convinced that it was a plot against Daniel, immediately ordered that the accusers of Daniel be cast into the den of lions with their wives and children. The lions broke their bones into pieces before they reached the bottom of the den.

EFFECTS OF DANIEL'S FAITH (Daniel 6:19-24)

Following Daniel's deliverance by God, king Darius promulgated a decree directing everybody in his kingdom to worship the God of Daniel as the Living God who rescues, works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, whose kingdom shall never be destroyed and whose dominion shall be to the end. Daniel's popularity and greatness increased throughout the reign of king Darius and of Cyrus, the Persian king.

Qualities of Daniel (Daniel 1:3-8; 6:3-5; 10:16; 6:22-23)

The qualities of Daniel cannot be overlooked. The following are some of the qualities seen in Daniel:

1. Daniel was from a royal family.
2. He was endowed with knowledge and understanding.
3. He was learned and competent in many things.
4. He had an excellent spirit. This was the reason he was able to interpret the king's dream. (Daniel 5:12, 6:3)
5. He was faithful and no error was found in him. This was his enemies' testimony about him. (Daniel 6:4-5)
6. He was an upright man and blameless in the things of God.
7. He had an absolute and unshakable faith and trust in God. (Daniel 6:23)
8. He was a devout worshipper of God.
9. He was uncompromising.

ASSIGNMENT

Find out from the Bible another person that was wrongly accused and suffered because of his faith in God.

CLASS: SS2
SUBJECT: CRS
TOPIC: TRUE RELIGION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
WEEK: 7
TERM: THIRD

TRUE RELIGION

Meaning of True Religion

True religion is the combination of our **worshipping God** and the **practice of righteousness** at all times. It is the combination of the ceremonial aspect of our faith with the moral requirements. The ceremonial aspect involves our regular attendance to church services on Sundays or holy days, payment of tithes, offerings and church dues or levies. The moral aspect of our faith is the practicing of righteousness in human relationship through the works of kindness, love, hospitality, honesty, justice, forgiveness, etc.

Amos was the earliest eighth century prophet. Before his call to prophetic work, he was a shepherd and **dresser of sycamore tree**. He was a native of **Tekoa in Judea** but prophesied in the northern kingdom during the reigns of **Jeroboam and the time of Uzziah in Judea**. During this period, there was an economic boom in the northern kingdom (Israel) which resulted in increased disparity between the rich and the poor. Oppression of the poor by the rich became rampant and social evil increased in the society. This social evil co-existed with religious insincerity.

Amos observed that Jewish religion was highly established on the ceremonial side, and totally lacking on the spiritual and moral aspect. The religion was characterized with hypocrisy, idolatry and empty formalism. The people assembled regularly for worship; made costly offerings and had magnificent places of worship, yet social evils still prevailed. This according to prophet Amos showed that the people were not practicing true religion. Some of the religious practices unacceptable to God outlined in Amos that displeased God include the following:

1. Festivals and merry making that lacked true, interpersonal communication and a real communication with God.
2. Holding of sacred services that were shallow and hypocritical.
3. The people followed religious double standards – they worshipped idols at Bethel and Gilgal.

4. Pollution of the land by the people's moral corruption- they were going to Bethel and Gilgal not to worship but to engage in all forms of evil practices such as cultism, prostitution, drunkenness and unnecessary fines which affected only the poor.
5. Little regard for holy periods.

Demands of True Religion (Amos 5:14-15, 24)

True religion demands purity of heart, honest desires and justice, humility and fair play. It is not characterized by regular worship and offerings. This was what Amos meant by declaring that God demanded justice and righteousness from his people and sacrifice (Amos 5:21-24). The kind of worship God demanded from the Israelites according to Amos includes:

1. Seeking God with passion so that they will live. (Amos 5:4)
2. Doing everything good and with honest report while shunning evil. (Amos 5:14)
3. Justice, fair play and being seen to be constantly doing what is right. (Amos 5:15, 24)
4. Righteousness should be allowed to reign in the lives of the people. (Amos 5: 24)
5. Repentance and returning to God for forgiveness.
6. It is necessary to note here, that God does not condemn regular worship, sacrifices – tithes and offerings, etc. Rather Amos meant that religious activities that are not followed by righteousness are meaningless.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social Vices of the Times of Amos (Amos 2:6-8; 4:1-2; 5:7-13)

The society of Amos' time was characterized by and enmeshed in official injustice, corruption, greed and false worship. Their social vices were so excessive and unbearable that God had to send Amos to warn them of the disastrous consequence of their actions if they failed to repent: in condemning the social vices of his time, Amos said that God is not only one-time and universal God, but also a just and righteous one, who demands justice and righteousness from his people.

He then exposed and condemned the social vices of the day which among others include:

1. **Bribery and corruption which was the order of the day:** The judges perverted justice by collecting bribes from the rich. The poor were denied justice as the judges could easily be bought over, 'even with a pair of shoes' (Amos 2:6-8; 5:10).

2. **Dishonesty of the merchants (they used false measures):** In most cases, they sold refuse as wheat to the poor (Amos 8:4-6).
3. **Greed and drunkenness:** The women of Samaria were making excessive demands on their husbands who in turn robbed and crushed the poor to meet their wives' demands. Those women were overfed and Amos described them as 'cows of Bashan', who must consequently be taken captive to Harmon in Assyria.
4. **Selfish luxury of the rich:** The wealthy became abundantly prosperous and lived in affluence, dwelling in expensive buildings (stone houses) and using costly beds made of ivory at the cost of the poor in the society (Amos 6:4-6).
5. **Licentiousness:** Indiscriminate sex pervaded the society. A son and father went in to the same maiden (Amos 2:7).

Opposition against Amos by Amaziah, Priest of the Royal Sanctuary

(Amos 7:10-17)

Amos' prophecy against the sanctuaries, especially the destruction of Bethel, the exile of the whole people of Israel including king Jeroboam II, and members of his family, did not go down well with Amaziah, the priest of Bethel. Amaziah saw Amos' prophesy as conspiracy and treason to overthrow the government of king Jeroboam. He therefore reported the prophet to the king. He also ordered Amos to go back to his country, the southern kingdom (Judah) and prophesy there, to earn a living and stop prophesying any longer at Bethel because it was the king's sanctuary and court.

Responding, Amos politely told Amaziah that he was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son but God called him out of his former occupation as a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees to go and prophesy to the people of the northern kingdom (Israel). He was God's mouth-piece hence a prophet of God (Amos 7:10-14).

He further prophesied about the impending exile, during which their wives would be harlots in the city and their sons and daughters would fall by the sword.

Divine Judgement of Evil Doers (Amos 4:2-3; 4:6-10; 5:14-20; 7:16-17; 8:9-10)

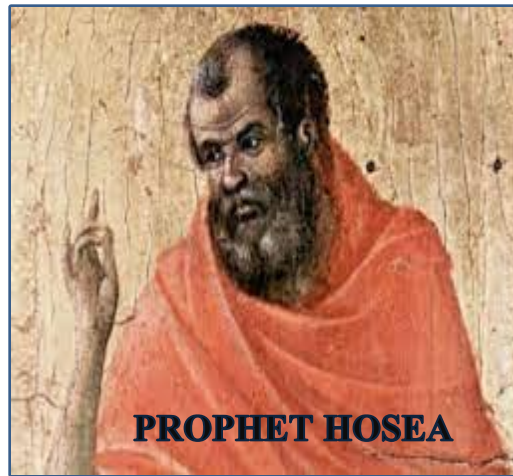
God tried to make the people of Israel to return to him by visiting them with drought, famine and pestilence, yet, they remained unrepentant and continued with the prevalent social and religious vices. Amos therefore prophesied and outlined the impending divine judgment.

1. The sanctuaries would be destroyed.
2. The people of Israel would suffer captivity through Assyria. The rampaging enemy forces would be so vicious and heartless.
3. Natural disasters in form of famine, drought, crop failure and plagues such as wind and sand storms, lice, locust invasion, natural calamities etc.
4. The upper class of the society would be the first to go into exile and would lead the columns of refugees (Amos 6: 6-7).
5. Lack of safety as one who ran to the house for safety, leaning his hand on the wall would be bitten by snake (Amos 5:19).
6. Amaziah would be taken to a defiled land where he would cease to perform his priestly duty, and would die in the land of captivity.
7. Amaziah's wife would be left alone as a widow. She would end up being a prostitute for a living.
8. The so called day of the Lord, the Jews were hoping for would be a doom-day and a day of darkness.

ASSIGNMENT

State four risky experiences faced by Christians in our society today.

CLASS: SS2
SUBJECT: CRS
TOPIC: DIVINE LOVE
WEEK: 8
TERM: THIRD



GOD ASKS HOSEA TO MARRY GOMER, A HARLOT, AND RAISE CHILDREN BY HER TO DEMONSTRATE ISRAEL'S HARLOTTRY (HOSEA 1)

Hosea is referred to as the “**prophet of love**” because his messages centred on God’s love for the children of Israel in spite of their unfaithfulness. His marital experience served as a practical example to his message of love. His message was against immorality, political and religious corruption. He encouraged the people to repent and turn back to God. His period of prophecy spread through the reigns of king Uzziah, Jothan and Ahaz in the southern kingdom and Jeroboam in the northern kingdom.

Unlike Amos, he was a native of Israel (i.e. Northern kingdom), and he delivered his message there. At the time of his prophetic ministry, northern kingdom was witnessing a period of political instability and religious syncretism. At this point, God instructed Hosea the son of Beerai to marry a harlot, Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and have children of harlotry through her.

Hosea obeyed God’s order and eventually had three children with Gomer – two sons and one daughter. These children were given symbolic names that expressed God’s anger at the people of Israel who had forsaken their God to play harlotry with other gods.

- First son was **Jezreel** which meant that God would punish the house of Jehu for the “blood of Jezreel”. This refers to the innocent blood which the wicked Jehu shed at the valley of Jezreel during his revolution.
- The second child – the daughter’s name was **Lo-ruhamah** or ‘**Not pitied**’ or ‘**No mercy**’. This signified that God would no longer have pity upon the house of Israel.
- The third child – the son’s name was **Lo-anmi** or “**Not my people**” this means that God would no longer regard Israel as his people as they had forsaken him.

God later promised His love to Israel by saying that He would multiply them greatly like the sea sand that could not be numbered. Also He would forgive and restore the whole nation of Israel- the Northern kingdom and Judah (southern kingdom) after the corrective punishment. Both kingdoms would be united under one leader.

The Unfaithfulness of Israel to God and His Continuous Love for Her (Hosea 2-3)

Hosea had provided and cared for his Wife Gomer. Yet, after giving birth to her three children, she left Hosea and ran after her worthless lover she had hoped to benefit more from. Gomer became unfaithful; due to Hosea's persistent love for her, he continued to plead with her to come back because he knew that she was not going to benefit from those other men but to suffer. Gomer refused to come back. He sent her children to plead with her but she ignored them as well. In spite of Gomer's unfaithfulness, Hosea still persisted in his love for her. At last, not knowing what else to do, Hosea divorced her. Nevertheless, he reclaimed her back to himself eventually.

The marital experience of Hosea was synonymous with God's relationship with the Israelites. God, as the husband, had demonstrated a lot of love to the Israelites right from the time he set them free from Egypt with a lot of signs and wonders to the period of Hosea's ministry; God had also established covenant with them, but Israel had never been faithful in keeping the Lord's commandments. They indulged in sin of idolatry- running after other gods like Hosea's wife Gomer who ran to other men.

As Hosea divorced Gomer for refusing to come back to him after many pleadings, so God had sent many prophets to appeal to the Israelites to turn from their evil ways and return to God but all appeals were in vain. God had no option but to divorce Israel. Nevertheless, God's love for Israel still persisted in spite of their unfaithfulness. God still hoped and expected they would repent and come back to him. He pleaded with them severally to forsake Baal and worship Him. Hosea pointed out that the priests and prophets who refused to rebuke Israel for their unfaithfulness would equally be punished.

The bottom line in Hosea messages is the willingness and readiness of God to accept his people back if they genuinely repented.

Israel's Superficial Response to God's Love (Hosea 6:1-11)

Israel's response to God's love was a typical example of man's negative response to God's love and call. The people of Israel's immediate response were not genuine. They

worshipped God with their lips but their hearts were far from him. They thought that to affect a superficial return to God would be enough to alleviate their suffering. They came with much sacrifice and burnt offerings in order to please God but their hearts were far away from him.

They did not return with a repentant heart, rather, they returned because they were suffering. Their concern was just to be free from God's chastisement. They did not care to know where and how they offended God so as to repent and forsake that very sin. The cause of their broken relationship with God was lack of love and knowledge of God hence Hosea declared that God desired steadfast love and knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

ASSIGNMENT

1. How does the story of Hosea and Gomer portray the nature of God?
2. What lessons can we learn from the story of Hosea and Gomer?

CLASS: SS2
SUBJECT: CRS
TOPIC: DIVINE LOVE II
WEEK: 9
TERM: THIRD

GOD DEMANDS STEADFAST LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE OF HIM (HOSEA 6:6)

Hosea appealed to the people of Israel to genuinely return to their God for they had stumbled and failed because of their sins and iniquities. He advised them to manifest genuine repentance, confess their sins and accept only those things that are good in the sight of God. He also advised them to show mercy to the needy; and to desist from idolatry. He warned them to stop their political alliance with the Assyrians as that would not bring solution to their political crisis.

These, according to prophet Hosea were the only things that would deliver and save them from divine judgment and not their numerous offerings and sacrifices without corresponding righteousness and holiness.

POSITIVE RESPONSE TO GOD'S LOVE REQUIRES PERSISTENCE (Hosea 6:1-4)

God's love for Israel was a steadfast and persisting love. This was demonstrated with Hosea's marital experience. God was like Israel's husband. As a husband is normally jealous seeing his wife run after other men, so was God not happy that Israel forsook Him for other gods. In His effort to see persuade Israel to return back to Him, He sent prophets to them, warning them to desist from their evil ways and come back to God. As a husband would naturally divorce an unfaithful and wayward wife, God threatened to divorce Israel by allowing a nation to overwhelm them and carry them away in captivity.

To avert God's punishment, they pretended to have repented while in their mind, there was no genuine love for God. However, God still persisted in loving them in spite of their unfaithfulness and was prepared to take them back to Himself once they showed sign of genuine repentance.

In the same vein, God's love for man generally, is steadfast and persistent. He protects and provides abundantly for man to enjoy. But man, on his part has not been faithful to God. Many people profess to love God but their love is hypocritical and conditional. They only come to God when they have problems for solution.

Since God does not want anyone to perish, He expects us to respond positively to His love by genuine repentance with sincerity of heart and confession. As we desist from superficial, negative and selfish repentance; our relationship will be established based on His love for man.

GOD PROMISES RESTORATION TO THOSE WHO RETURN TO HIM IN REPENTANCE (Hosea 14)

God responded to Israel's superficial and fake repentance by expressing His love for them. He reminded them that what He required from them was sincere and genuine repentance not mere plea for mercy. Their rituals and sacrifices were not good enough until they were matched with genuine repentance. Then He promised to heal them of their unfaithfulness so that they would return to Him and worship Him in sincerity; He would restore them by making them return to their land after His corrective punishment; Israel and Judah would be united under a divinely appointed leader who would rule them in the fear and knowledge of God, unlike their corrupt leaders that had led them astray. This divinely appointed leader would come from the dynasty of David – a reference to the coming of the Messiah.

God promises restoration to Christians who return to Him in genuine repentance from their sins and backsliding state. The mercy of God is available to those who acknowledge, confess, and forsake their sins, and exercise faith in God.

ASSIGNMENT

1. State three (3) punishments pronounced on Israel by God through prophet Hosea.
2. How does the story of Hosea and Gomer illustrate God's love for man?