

The Everlasting Kingdom of God



King David

THE EVERLASTING KINGDOME OF GOD

By
SUNDARA RAO TSAPPIDI

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“CHRIST SHALL GIVE THEE LIGHT”

- Ephesians 5:14

Foreword

Writing is a gift of God. Rev. Dr. Sundara Rao Tsappidi has obtained it through shedding tears in prayer. He was not a writer when he was in the profession, not even after his retirement. But his Holy Land Tour brought amazing change in his life and attitude, a turning point in his life.



Though he is shattered in health, though he has lost 40% of eye sight, he has the thirst and zeal for reading books on the Bible. Unlike many retired men who stay in the USA, dragging on life without any output, by God's grace, Rev. Dr. Sundara Rao has excelled such miserable and unfruitful life by making use of the library for the blind and by writing books on the Bible. God has given me a great opportunity to read each and every article from all his five books. Each article is unique of its kind, centers round our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The first four books have created an impact on the minds of the readers as well as the researchers on the Bible.

Though his heart is heavy due to the sudden and sad demise of his son, SVtr. David Ravi kumar, an Engineer in the USA, the Comforter comforts him by encouraging him writing articles on the Bible which is a great blessing for many, in fact he cherishes it the most.

The fifth book entitles, “The Everlasting Kingdom of God,” Contains two parts. The first part deals with some important and useful topics from the Old Testament like “Davidic Dynastic Rulers, part I and part II.” They tell us how some kings after King David sinned against the True and Living God, embracing the pagan gods. Due to their sin they are subjected to the wrath of God. Through their lives we have to learn that we should be obedient and faithful to the Lord seeking His grace by praying with all humility. The second part contains articles on the New Testament. All these articles are very informative and will satisfy the thirst of the readers to know more about the Saviour, the Redeemer and the Hope of Salvation.

Recently the Bible University of Holy Spirit, New Jerusalem and Bethlehem, The Global University of Unique Professionalism/Tambaram, Chennai, has conferred Doctor of Sacred Literature (D.Litt) on Mr. Sundara Rao for his worthy and thought provoking articles on the Bible. I congratulate him for this rare honour. This special talent of writing will be a great blessing for all his readers. Therefore, I pray to the Lord to bless him with good health and wisdom to bring out many more books in future. May the Lord our Saviour Bless all his readers, especially Rev. Dr. Sundara Rao and the members of his family with grace, peace and abundance of love.

The servant of God,



D.S. Sundara Rao,
M.A., M.Phil.,

Associate Professor of English (Rtd)

MY TESTIMONY IN NUT SHALL

I was born at Manyamvaripalle, a small village in prakasham District. Andhra Pradesh, India. My Fathers is Philip Tsappidi and Mother Mrs. Rojamma Philip. My Father worked as Evangelist in Lutheran Mission and my mother helped him as a praying woman. My parents had Five Children and I was the third child. My School Education took place at Tarlupadu, Boarding School, near Markapur, Prakasham District. Later, I moved to Guntur and studied at Andhra Christian College. I obtained my Post Graduate Degree from Saugar University (Madhya Pradesh) in English Language and Literature in 1965. I worked as Lecturer in English at various Colleges and also the principal of a College in Cuttack (Orissa State) for some time



Finally, I joined in KBN College, Vijayawada and retired from service in 1994. I was married to Grace Vijaya a Mathematics Teacher in 1969 and we were blessed with three children, David Ravi Kumar, Beaula and Samuel Kiran Kumar. David became an Engineer. My Daughter Beaula became a Doctor (Cancer Specialist) and last son Samuel also became a Doctor (Neurosurgeon) and all settled in the USA. But the most pathetic event in our life is we lost our First son David, recently in the USA. Still God with all His Mercy and Grace comforted us through God's servants, friends and relatives we thank the Lord for helping us in all our troubles.

I also thank the Lord for using me in His work from 1968. I rendered my services as Church Treasurer for St. Peter's Lutheran Church West Parish Vijayawada -1 for some years. By the Grace of God I happened to participate as a Member in the International council of Christian Church's (ICCC) headed by Dr. Carl Macntire of New Jersey, USA , and Far Eastern council of Christian Churches (FECCC) headed by Rev. Dr. Queck from Singapore. As our children settled in the USA my wife and myself have been planning to stay with our children but we are afraid of the climatic conditions there. However, we have been frequently visiting our children.

Apart from climatic conditions we don't have social life also as we have in India. So, we have to remain idle always. In such conditions as idle man's mind is devil's work shop, many foolish ideas came to my mind and one of them was man's mortality. When I was seriously sick I got a dream One night. In the dream, I saw myself dead and when to heaven. God came to me and received me. He caught me by His hand. Then we walked together for about 2 furlongs on a red brick road. The roofs of the houses on either side of the road were also with brick red tiles. At the end of the road

God showed me a beautiful church and told me “ Your time to come to heaven has not yet come”. So, go back to your place, guide the people to read the Bible and go to church regularly. He further advised me to teach people how to pray and Glorify God and also pray for their eternal life. I suddenly woke up from my dream and found myself on the same bed. Then, I thought God had extended my life for some more years like the king Hezekiah with some purpose. This event took place some seven years ago.

This memorable incident is a turning point in my life. God gave me a chance to visit the Holy Land with my wife. Then, after returning from the Holy Land, I happened to tell one of my friends what I had seen there. He immediately suggested that I should put all that in black and white. I was tempted by his suggestion and prayed to God by shedding tears to grant me the gift of writing. God accepted my humble request and granted me the gift of writing. Then I prepared to pen the historical background of some personalities and incidents in the Bible. So far, I have written Four Books. 1. The Legacy of God’s People 2. Quest for the Living God 3. Offspring’s from the Tabernacle 4. The Redemption Plan of God and the Fifth book is The Everlasting Kingdom of God.

The prime aim of writing these Biblical events is that the matter may be useful to theological students and young preachers to know more about the history behind these people and the events in the Bible. In additions to all this, I built a church at Gosaveedu village near Vijayawada for good congregation with my pension money and it's name is (Jehovah-ji-reh) whenever I come to India from the USA I used to preach in this church and at other places whoever invites me. Then two years ago God prompted me to visit the elementary boarding school where I studied 65 years ago. I was surprised to see the pathetic condition of the students of my third generation and provided them with decent clothes and Christmas dinner with the support of UECF from New Jersey, U.S.A. Some interesting believers are reading my books in some countries in their computers through www.uecf.net (United Evangelical Christian Fellowship), a non-denominational church and I am a member of that church.

Now I am 76 years old. I thank Lord for His concerned toward me. I have been humbly praying to my savior our Lord Jesus Christ to grant me good Health to glorify His name through my books. I wish to serve the Lord to the best my ability basing on the dictum “Service to Humanity is service to Divinity”. May God bless us all.

Yours in Christ

Rev. Dr. **SUNDARA RAO TSAPPIDI** M.A., D.Litt.

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FROM THE BEGINNING

From the beginning man was instructed to believe that God created both the heaven and earth then laid a foundation for understanding the origin and the purpose of His creation. But man who wanted to reject the same “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”, went through like a blind man in a darkroom and looking for black cat which they could never find. Such peculiar people never try to understand where they came from or where they were going or how to live between belief and disbelief. Such people must be brought to the knowledge of truth. God created the heaven and the earth not to spend time nor to show His power to the world but with some important purpose. His plan was so profound even the wisest man could not comprehend. His plan was wonderful that conceived in love. It has been guarded by holiness. It was built upon truth. It would be available freely through grace and prompted by faith. It was properly implemented by the sovereign omnipotent power which is revealed in the Bible. So if such a master plan of God was rejected by any man in his life time it is nothing but sheer foolishness on his part. As God is always virtuous. He would allow anything only if it is the best. Since He Himself is the best, He would expose His intrinsic eternal perfection which is primarily important for His redemption of the earth.

God created the heaven and the earth in five days. On the sixth day He created man and on the seventh day He took rest. That does not mean He was tired of His creation and so needed rest. He is infinite and omnipotent and never gets exhausted. He took rest on the seventh day means He completed His work of creation perfectly and He was happy at its perfection. Then God’s commentary on His creation was that “It was very good.” (Genesis 1:31). Regarding the creation of man, though it was lost in time it was first in importance. God, in His sovereign authority, simply declared that above all He created man in His own image. Only about man it is said and the Lord God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul (living being) (Genesis 2:7). The image and likeness of which man was created was not physical image or likeness. Man was not like God in physical appearance and God does not possess human form. However for His existence God had to possess some substance (appearance). Man’s substance is physical whereas God’s substance is spiritual. Man’s substance is visible but God’s substance is invisible. Man’s substance is mortal whereas God’s substance is immortal. Man’s substance is corruptible whereas God’s substance is incorruptible.

Man was created in the image and likeness of God and that man possessed necessary intelligence, emotion and will. And these three qualities in man could make him a full man and gave him good understanding capacity but these three gifts differ from person to person. They also make man possible to know and understand God and His greatness quickly. Man can understand God and he will not allow doubts pass through his intellectual caliber with the heart he can response to God's love and with the will he can choose either to obey or to disobey God because, he has possessed rational thinking and capability. Among all of God's creation only man was endowed with the above said capacity by the creator. With all the information it is clear and fact that man was created in the image of God which sets him apart from and infinitely higher than all animal world and even immortal angels. Man is formed with dignity and nobility and worth of humankind. Among all things on the planet it is only the man who can comprehend the greatness of God and His merciful nature with his gift of ability and be thankful to Him for having created him.

God created man not only in His own image, not only breathed and gave him life to live but also made him the Lord of His creation. Then man was granted required intelligence and power in order to control and dominate all humanity and other living things on the earth. And God said, "Let us make man in our image after our likeness let him have the domination upon the earth." (Geniuses 1:26). God's plan was that man should govern the earth with divine direction. The earth and its inhabitants had to be controlled by God through man. According to God's plan and desire man must bring glory to God and make Him happy forever. Since God created man with some gifts and purpose he can have many chances to make use of his intelligence, emotion and will.

As God created first man and woman and called them Adam and Eve, He wanted to test their loyalty towards Him. So He kept a tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden and then told them to eat all the fruits of the garden except the fruit of a particular tree which was put in the middle of the garden. The fruit of the tree was called the fruit of knowledge of good and evil. God declared also the consequences of eating the fruit would be death. In the mean time Satan in the guise of serpent entered the scene cunningly and convinced them to eat the forbidden fruit. So the father of the humanity disobeyed the commandment of God and committed sin which led man to death as the wages of sin is death. Then God asked Adam, "Do you understand Me with your mind? Don't eat the fruit of that forbidden tree? Adam, do you love Me with your heart? Don't eat that fruit under any circumstances, Adam will you obey

Me with your will? Don't eat that forbidden fruit and become a sinner and invite death".

God put Adam and Eve in a perfect place called the Garden of Eden which contained everything needed for their survival. They gave names to all living creatures and maintained their domination over them. Above all, the most wonderful thing was the creator Himself used to come to the garden frequently and commune with Adam and Eve. So without any doubt it was like a paradise to them. But to such pristine environment one day Satan came in the disguise of a serpent to take revenge against God through Adam and Eve by enticing them to eat that forbidden fruit. He succeeded in his attempt and both Adam and Eve remained as sinners. Satan was not like this from the beginning. He was more handsome and intelligent than other arch angels in heaven. His name was Lucifer in heaven. He was an anointed cherub, perhaps the highest of all living beings. Because of his extra gifts he felt proud of himself and rebelled against God for supremacy in heaven and finally necked out from heaven. Since then he had been trying to take revenge against God as and when he gets the chance.

Satain described his lofty plan in the following manner:

- ✓ I will ascend unto heaven.
- ✓ I will exalt my throne above the stars (angels of God).
- ✓ I will sit also upon the movement of the congregation.
- ✓ I will ascend above the heights of clouds.
- ✓ I will be like "The Most High" (EL ELOHIM) (Isaiah 14: 12-14).

The words "The Most High" are a translation of the Hebrew word "Eleohim" the Hebrew word "EL" is a shortened form of elohim which means God. Again El Elohim taken together it means the most high God. The Biblical commentary on the Most High God is that He is the creator and possessor of the heaven and the earth. (Genesis 14 : 18-20).

Satan in his rebellion against God wanted to be the most high God. That is he wanted to be the possessor of the heaven and the earth and rule over the humanity like God. He wished even to replace God. Because of this crooked plan Satan was thrown out of heaven. And then God said, "Therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain (Kingdom) of God and I will destroy thee O covering cherub." Accordingly Satan was sent out of the heaven to the earth and his ultimate defeat was foretold. God committed the reign of the earth to

man. First Satan planned to rule in the heaven and that plan was misfired and God necked him out of heaven. Now he was in the danger of not possessing even the earth. So desperately Satan made his way into the Garden of Eden to disturb God's people. And by making them disobey God Satan won the game against God. Finally, the events that took place in the Garden of Eden caused a "Curse" from God. The serpent was used as an agent by Satan for his selfishness also received curse by God. It had to crawl with its belly and eat dust for its survival. Satan received its curse which was a fatal wound on the cross and on Christ's second coming. Satan will be consigned to the "Lake of Fire."

And man also received his share of punishment from God. The earth which was supposed to be ruled by him was snatched away by Satan and man had to die by becoming old. As man came from dust he must go back to dust again by means of death. Physical death separates soul from the body where as spiritual death is separation of soul from God. As they disobeyed God, the result of that was spiritual death which became inevitable and immediate. This result made them to hide themselves from the presence of God. The process of becoming old and then death had begun with Adam and Eve. Actually there was no death prior to this curse. The disobedience of Adam and Eve brought sin and made man die. So the collection of tears of humanity from the beginning of history can trace their origin in a singular sin of Adam and Even in the Garden of Eden. In general man commits sin because he is born with sin nature.

There are different types of sins and the greatest of such sin is "pride". It keeps man from freely accepting God's gracious provision for sin which naturally brings life and blessing from out of death and curse. Therefore, everyone of us is represented in our first parents when they disobeyed God in the garden. Apostle Paul wrote, "Wherefore by one man's (Adam) sin entered into the world and death by sin so that passed upon all men for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12). All the incidents occurred in the Garden of Eden caused a permanent curse on mankind. It is a great fall from kingship to poverty, from light to darkness, from life to death, from intimate wonderful fellowship with God to separation and enmity with God. Satan by treachery usurped man's right to rule the earth and since then Satan was considered to be the god of the age. Man was separated miserably from his creator under divine judgment and waiting for a place of eternal torment called "hell".

The outcome of all this unfortunate event was that man remained in complete darkness. He became helpless and hopeless in the absolute darkness. Then into that darkness a ray of light came which was like a powerful laser beam. That ray of light would be more than sufficient to guide the people for centuries and millennia. Some ancient prophets with details spoke about this light. The Jewish rabbis also called it Messianic expectation. And this Messianic expectation revolved around a promise made by God. This promise was not made by an ordinary man but by the creator of the universe. And the promise of God was that one day the “seed” of the woman would come and bruise the head of Satan.

The first prophecy in the Bible is the promise of the coming seed of the woman. (Genesis 3:15). The whole of God’s redemption plan rests on the success of the seed of that woman. He would come to lime light of history at an appropriate time in the right way at the right place and then He must accomplish the plan and promise of His father to redeem men and recapture the earth. With the fall of Adam and Eve their son Cain desired to follow the footprints of Satan. He rebelled against his brother Abel and finally killed him. It became the first murder in the history of the Bible. The murder of righteous Abel by his crooked brother Cain could be done only by Satanic influence. Adam had another son when he was 130 years old and his name “Seth” who replaced Abel in his righteousness to some extent and through his line according to prophecy the seed of the woman would come. Later Adam and Eve had some more sons and daughters. But according to “The book of Jubilees” Adam and Eve had nine children both sons and daughters and they married among themselves. Adam lived for 930 years and died.

Before Noahic flood came there was an atmospheric canopy over the earth. The canopy had been protecting the earth from harmful ultraviolet light. This light became useful to people for their good health and long life. But the time of Noahic flood that canopy was removed by God and as a result at the side of flood life began to shorten. It is mentioned in the Bible in the following way “In the 600th year of Noah’s life in the second month the seventieth day of the month the same day for all the fountains of the great deep broken up and the windows of the heaven were opened the canopy removed. (Genesis 7:11). The effect of this canopy over the earth once it was removed “And the rain was upon the earth 40 days and 40 nights prior to this memorable event the earth was like a hot-house. All the water which had been trapped for centuries above the canopy came down in the form of flood. Why God sent this flood? He

perhaps to destroy all the flesh in a worldwide flood. The suitable answer for this can be found in the sixth chapter of Genesis “And it came to pass when men began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born unto them that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair and beautiful they took them as wives of all whom they choose.” (Genesis 6:1-2).

The true identity of the sons of God has become a subject of controversy for a longtime to the theological elite. The main topic for their discussion was who the sons of God were called and who the daughters of men were. Let us try to understand the importance of this topic and also the implications that caused the holy and loving God to destroy the whole world with this Noahic flood. There were two major views for the identification of the “sons of God”. The first view was that the sons of God were the male descendents of Adam through righteous lineage of “Seth” who replaced the murdered Abel. These righteous men one day looked about and saw the daughters of men who were said to be unrighteous women from the lineage of Cain. The righteous men saw the unrighteous women beautiful and took them as wives. This was argued for some time and came to an understanding that this unholy union of righteous men from the lineage of Seth and unrighteous women from the lineage of Cain produced the humanity that became so wicked and God could not bear that wickedness. He thought human heart was pregnant with evil only. This situation forced God to destroy the entire world with flood. There are some problems linked with this evil.

From the days of Seth till we are introduced to the sons of God about 1500 years must have passed according to the genealogy. Seth was a godly man like Abel. But Seth was not completely a perfect man from the fallen nature of his father Adam. During the period of 1500 years and the longevity of life before the flood Seth must have thousands of descendants and through the centuries all these men were identified as the sons of God. But there is no substantial evidence either in the Bible or in the secular history regarding the above said statement. Then what was true in the case of Seth must be the same in the case of Cain who was cursed by God for killing his own brother Abel but that does not mean all his female descendants during the 1500 years were all ungodly women. In the Bible and the secular history also there are some incidents wherein some ungodly parents have godly descendants as sometimes beautiful flower blooms in the desert.

In the union between the sons of God (From Seth) and the daughters of men (from Cain) represented a union between righteous men and unrighteous women. Actually it was forbidden in scripture that godly children sometimes the result of spiritually mixed marriages. According to the scripture we have some examples of marriages between sons of God who were righteous and daughters of men who were unrighteous as resulted in their offspring's as mighty men and men of renowned. There are some other theologians with different views. Their thinking was that the sons of God were said to be identified with some of the fallen angelic beings who left their natural position and met men thereby cohabited with human women who were referred to as daughters of men. This would have been unnatural union which violated God's ordained order of marriage between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24).

There are ample reasons to accept this point of view as appropriate subject but there might be some other who bluntly reject this as unnatural and bizarre. In the Old Testament the expression "Sons of God" is used only onetime in Genesis 6th chapter wherein it is clearly referred to the angelic beings. Then in the book of "Job" which was the earliest written one of the Bible this statement is found. Now, there was a day when the sons of God (reference to angelic beings) came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan also came with them. Apostle Paul too spoke about a group of fallen angels who sinned were cast down to hell and locked in chains. All the actions of these fallen angels were directly associated with the events which finally lead to Noachic flood. The "Mac Arthur Study Bible" commented regarding the sin committed by the fallen angels in the following words in 2 Peter 2:4. These angels according to Jude did not keep their proper domain that is they entered the premises of men and indiscriminately cohabited with their women. Apparently, this is a reference to the fallen angels of Genesis 6th chapter the sons of God. Jude the half brother of the Lord Jesus addressed the same subject positively.

He spoke about the angels who did not keep properly their domain. For their sin, they were kept in iron fetters in darkness till the day of judgment of God. They happened to mix and mingle with the people of Sodom and Gomorah who gave themselves to sexual immorality and desired for strange human flesh. The sin committed in Sodom and Gomorah was really abnormal and unnatural sex. It was called Sodomy or homosexuality. Some fallen angels left even their original place lived with human beings and took part in sex with the women or men and then felt guilty of their sinful activity with human beings. So the

argument of some critics about the identification of the fallen angels with the sons of God was brought to light. The phrase “The sons of God” is a reference from the teaching of the Lord Jesus when the Sadducees were trying to corner Jesus with their criss-cross questions as He was giving His speech concerning resurrection. He said that “For in the resurrection day they neither marry nor given in marriage but are as angels of God in heaven”.

Basing on the resurrection of Jesus the critics it seems came to an understanding about the angels that they have no sex and so they could not be the sons of God who cohabited with the human women as mentioned in the Genesis sixth chapter. In their argument the main problem is that the text does not say the angels are sexless as they suggest. But the text says the divine design for angels is it does not include marriage – like ordinary men and women the angels do not procreate normally. It does not suggest at any stage as the angels are sexless. What they were doing sexually became unnatural and unbelievable because they did not sin out of their boundaries of their normal domain. So they deserved the hardest punishment through judgment by God. And in this context we can see the most horrified and emotional statement of God in the entire Bible.

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continuously and that sinful life of man made God to repent that He had made man on the earth and it grieved Him at His heart” (Genesis 6:5-6). The union of the sons of God and daughters of men was only the master plan by Satan through the fallen angelic beings to corrupt the blood line of humanity through a progeny part angelic and part human. This unnatural wickedness forced God to take drastic action to destroy the world in 120 years through universal flood. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. This wonderful statement of God is an evidence of His deep love towards humanity. Noah and his wife were not contaminated by the wickedness of the sons of God and the daughters of men. Noah his wife, their three sons and their three daughters-in-law altogether 8 in number had to survive from flood to repopulate the earth.

Through this Noah’s family the seed of the woman the Messianic hope was still remained intact. At last, the flood came and after the water receded Noah’s Ark settled on the mount Ararat. Then Noah built an altar and worshipped the Lord and God blessed Noah and his family members. He said unto them “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.” (Genesis 9:1).

With the blessing of God the universal flood men began to repopulate the earth. And this time the great grandson of Noah according to the genealogy emerged as a leader of the people. His name was “Nimrod”. It is said about him that he was a mighty hunter. Perhaps of the souls of men in his time it was believed by many people as Nimrod must have been originally meant (Revolt). Accordingly Nimrod revolted even against God and established a kingdom of his own with a capital city Babel which later became Babylon. Then he built a tower of Babel which also “And they said Go Let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven and let us make us a name lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” “ (Genesis 11:4).

The main purpose of the tower of Babel was not to reach heaven. It was only an elevated platform to observe the heavenly bodies to worship the sun god and other heavenly bodies like pagan worshippers. The tower of Babel was also a symbol of mankind unto one religion and one language. The wife of Nimrod was Semiramis and she was popularly known as the “Queen of heaven” according to ancient traditions. Her image was with a dove upon her head and wings outstretched like the horn of the new moon which became the sem or sign of the defiance of God and banner of Babylonianism. It is believed by pagans that Nimrod after death ascended unto heaven and united with the sun. The pagans also trusted that the wife of Nimrod after his death became pregnant miraculously by a sun beam she received from her dead husband as the sun beam carried the sperm of her husband. Then Semiramis gave birth to a son and called him Tammuz (and this was called by Biblical historians counterfeited virgin birth). This Tammuz grew to manhood and one day went out for hunting and miserably killed by a wild bear. This incident made her to lament for her dead son for forty days (which was like the observation of fasting for forty Lenten days before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ) and the result of her mourning was her son came back to life again (and this was called the counterfeited resurrection).

So with this counterfeited resurrection Tammuz was treated by pagans as both the son of Nimrod and Nimrod himself. He began counterfeit religious system for the love of people – a harlot no more than a harlot babylonianism became the mother of harlots. All the religious systems were centered on the worship of a counterfeit mother and son. It is not surprising at all as this system is called in the book of Revelation (mystery Babylon the great the mother of harlots and abomination of the earth) (Revelation 17:5). We can come to a conclusion by stating that all false religions called with any name were originated

in Babylon with Nimrod, his wife Semirames and their son Tammuz as mentioned below – In each example the mother was Semirames and the son Tammuz or Nimrod.

1. In Egypt the mother was “Isis” (H Semirames) and the son “Oseres”.
2. In Assyria the mother was “Ishtar” (H Semirames) and the son “Bacchus”.
3. In India the mother was “Isi” (H Semirames) and the son “Iswara” (Tammuz).
4. In Asia the mother was “Cybeli” (H Semirames) and the son “Deoiees”.
5. In Greece the mother was “Aphrodite” (H Semirames) and the son “Eros”.
6. In Rome the mother was “Venus” (H Semirames) and the son “Cupid”.

We are under the impression that Cupid was an innocent romantic little guy who appears on Valentine’s Day with a bow but he was a harmless one. If we look into the ancient historical background he was no other than Tammuz son of Semirames or Nimrod the mighty hunter. Cupid shoots his arrows not at the hearts for romantic love but at the eternal souls of men to woo them and deviate from the love of the true and living God. As time passed on Babel was changed into Babylon and Babylon into modern Iraq. So to say all false religions and false languages of any kind in the world today had their origin in Babylon only.

It is also believed by some scholars that both Roman Catholicism and Islam worship of “Allah” had their origin in Babylon. It is hoped in the days of antichrist that there may be one world government and one world religion. But still Semirames with satanic influence may try to entice men and divert them from worshipping our true and living God. If Satan is able to do that we can call it spiritual adultery. Prophet Jeremiah who was also called weeping prophet preached to the Jews in Egypt condemned them as they were worshipping the queen of heaven Semirames. He rebuked them with the following words “the children gather wood and the fathers kindle the fire and the women knead them tough to make cakes to the queen of heaven and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods that they may provoke me to anger.” Jeremiah 7:18. In the same way prophet Ezekiel was ministering to the Jewish captives in Babylon. God showed him in his vision by taking him towards the Northern side of the temple. He saw how women were wailing and weeping for Tammuz. In Egypt the Jews were worshipping the mother Semirames. In Jerusalem in the very temple of God they were worshipping Nimrod and his son Tammuz. This ungrateful behavior of the Jews prompted God to intervene in this evil project. The Lord came down and saw the city and the tower built

by them. He saw they were one in unity and speaking one language. So he confused them and scattered them. It was called Babel because God confused their language and scattered them. It was only confusion of the people and scattering of them into all corners of the earth caused for the formation of many nations with their own languages and religions. And it is said today there are about 6000 languages in the world and the Bible is available in about 2450 languages.

If God has not done this there would have been one world government and one world religion on the earth today. But Satan is always there awaiting the opportunity to pollute God's people. First, he used Adam and Eve, then the sons of God and daughters of men and then Nimrod, his wife and their son. During the first 1800 years of recorded history men sinned and disobeyed God and His sovereignty. Still people know who the true God is and who the false gods people of the nations that were formed after the confusion of language and the people's scattering from Babylon finally became idolaters. They forgot their creator Almighty God completely. In such conditions there were no people to find out the seed of the woman who was to come to bruise the head of Satan. God created man in his own image to rule the earth as a king but that was usurped by Satan the right of ruling the earth then God made a promise that one day the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the Satan, deliver man from curse and restore to him the scepter of kingship over the earth. The confrontation between God and Satan continued from the time of Abraham. And through Abraham God wanted to establish a new nation which was completely different from all gentile nations. As He planned the seed of the woman would come from that new nation only.

Abraham was called the father of the nations of Israel's but technically speaking Isaac was the first citizen of that nation. And God declared "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" Genesis 21:12. The birth of Isaac was no doubt miraculous and supernatural because of the old age of Abraham and Sarah. Anyway the blessing and legal lineage was started through Jacob (who was also called Israel) the second son of Isaac. Jacob had 12 sons who became leaders of 12 tribes. God had promised Abraham that all the nations shall be blessed through his lineage. Then from which of the 12 tribes, the seed of the woman would come. When Jacob was on his death bed he summoned his sons to bless them. He told each of them something as his last will and statement when the turn of Judah came Jacob said "the scepter shall not depart from Judah" (Genesis 49:10). So with the blessing of Jacob the seed of the woman came from the tribe of Judah.

Prior to this a terrible famine in the promised land forced Jacob and his sons to go and settle in a fertile land called “Goshen” in Egypt as Joseph one of the sons of Jacob became the prime minister of Egypt at that time. After the death of Joseph the Jews lost their identity and remained as slaves for centuries. They even forgot their creator and began to worship heathen gods and goddesses who were about 80 in number. Yet there were some Jews among them who remembered the God of their fore fathers and worshipped Him only as true and living God.

The ultimate seed of the woman according to the prophecy was Jesus Christ who was a direct descendent of king David and his son Nathan but not from Solomon. The history of Israel in the Old Testament is the history of a nation travelling in pain to give birth to the seed of the woman not for her benefit alone but for the benefit of the whole world. In the New Testament opens with the thrilling declaration of its purpose. It is the book of the generation of Jesus Christ the son of King David, the son of Abraham. (Mathew 1:1). Here Jesus was the seed of the woman and the history was moving towards Him only. Jesus was the virgin born son of God and seed of the woman. Apostle Paul also wrote “when the fullness of the time was come God sent forth His son made of woman made under the law.” (Galatians 4:4). His life was sinless. His death on the cross was substitutionary and victorious from the dawn of history Satan had been trying to destroy the lineage through which the seed would come and God always checked the crooked plans of Satan. Even after the birth of Jesus Satan tried his power through king Herod to kill the seed by killing about 200 innocent male children in Bethlehem who were 2 years old and below. When Christ died on the cross Satan must have felt happy by thinking that the seed of the woman was no more.

As a death blow to him Jesus rose from the grave on the third day. This extraordinary incident must have disturbed Satan. Jesus said to His disciples that after resurrection He would go to His father in heaven from the Mount of Olives and sit on the right side of the throne. He promised them He would come again as the roaring lion of the tribe of Judah and as the heir to the throne of king David to rule over Israel and from there to rule the whole world and every believer is expecting His second coming at anytime with the music of trumpets from the Mount of Olives. But for the Jews the second coming of Messiah will be the first coming because they did not accept Him in His first coming.

LIFE OF LOT

The life of Lot, in the true sense of the word, does not hold good for our daily devotions because his actions and choices were not worthy for a true Christian to follow. His extended degrading family failures appear to be unworthy for a sermon or for Sunday school children. Still, the life of Lot began with a promise but ended in humiliation and frustration like many Christian families today. Apostle Peter warned us in the New Testament that every believer must live the life of righteousness. He wanted us to be holy in all manner of conversation. As it is written “Be ye Holy for I am Holy” (1 Peter 1:16) Undoubtedly, this must be the goal of all Christians or born again believers.

Jesus Himself declared “the spirit indeed is willing. But the flesh is weak.” This is not at all a philosophical saying but an absolute truth. It does not matter, how much we have been struggling with the flesh is as natural as breathing and sleeping. Our prime important quest for righteousness must be for holy living. If we meditate upon the life of Lot, we are in no way different from him. Lot was originally a righteous man. According to the statement of Peter Lot was vexed with the wicked life of people (for that man to dwell among the people of Sodom and Gomorah and heard their wicked conversation that vexed his pious soul day by day and also their unlawful and sinful deeds). Lot had really struggled a lot to overcome that dreadful society, but ended his righteous life in infamy.

Some people even though, they were born in good families, there is no guaranty that they would turn good in their life time inspite of their good starting. As we see in the Bible Lot also started his life with good family background; if we look at his genealogy. “Terah begat Abram, Nahor and Haran, and then Haran begat Lot”. From the three sons of Terah God had chosen Abram as a key person to be the father of a new people called Israelites in future. Though Lot was not the direct offspring of Abram, he could have the second place in the genealogy of Abram.

It is no doubt a gift of God, that Lot could have his way into the elite of Abram’s family. It is nothing but God’s grace. In the Bible in (genesis 12:28) we can find how Lot’s father died, and then how he became a dependant on Terah his grandfather and Abram his uncle. In the meantime, God asked Abram to have that heathen land ‘Ur’ the land of Chaldies and go to a distant place He would show, which was called “Canaan”, the land of milk and honey. Abram responded God’s call and started his journey with his father Terah wife Sarai

and nephew Lot to the Promised Land. But on the way, they settled temporarily at a place called “Haran,” probably the city named after Lot’s father.

In the mean time Terah also died. It means Lot lost both his father and grand father which made him more miserable and finally Abram became his chosen relative and Lot could share the blessings of God that were showered on Abram’s family and his descendents in future. Lot by remaining closer to Abram, received abundant blessings and as a result, he became as rich as Abram. Because of great blessing both received, the place they were residing became too small for them and for their flock.

So, Abram thought of dividing the land as two parts for both of them and he did it. Then Abram asked Lot to take which ever part he liked. As a matter of fact, God gave more importance to Abram in all aspects from the beginning in the entire family for his faith and righteousness. With those noble qualities he became a patriarch of the family. Still he wanted to show his nobility to Lot by giving first preference to him for selecting the land. And Lot proved his selfishness by choosing the fertile land because of Jordan river. This act showed his ambition and corrupted attitude. The land Lot selected was the Eastern part and poor Lot did not know the ins and outs of that place. He understood only one thing that there was a green paradise before him. At that time, he did not remember the righteous God fearing and spiritual nature of his uncle. Lot finally gathered all his block and went towards east where he was going to stay in the midst of notorious people of Sodom. Lot, unfortunately did not know who were living in that city, what kind of people they were, but as per his destiny, he was going to dwell with his family among the people who possessed nothing but wickedness and committed great sin in the sight of God. Lot was going to reap a bitter fruit for his worldly ambition in course of time. Then in a short period of their stay a war broke out and the rulers of that region became restless. As recorded in the Bible this must be the first war. Four kings with their armies were on one side in the battle field and five kings with their armies including Sodom on the other. It was a bad luck for Lot because Sodom was on the losing side. The result of the war forced Lot to pay some penalty for his nations defeat. In addition to that the kings who won the battle took away all the belongings of the people of Sodom and Gomorah and also their food stuff. While returning they took Lot and his property along with them.

In such critical situation a man who escaped from the battlefield met Abram and addressed him “Abram the Hebrew” and told him what had

happened to his nephew Lot. Here “Hebrew” means “stranger.” This news made him a hero to save his nephew from the clutches of his enemy and immediately he sprang into action. In his company there were 318 men well trained for emergency attack, who were used for such occasions only these faithful men walked 140 miles trek up to “Dan” and launched their attack against those victorious armies. And in the fighting the kings with their armies were miserably defeated by Abram and his men.

On the way home Abram happened to meet Melchizedec the high priest of the most high God. At that time he was called the king of Salem which later became Jerusalem historically. Abram received bread and wine and also blessings from Melchizedec since that time the defeated kings never tried to wag their tails before Abram, because he was a God’s man, and they realized their mistake in abducting his nephew Lot. Finally he was restored with all his belongings. With this incident we can understand the incredible relief and gratitude Lot must have had from his blessed uncle. But Lot’s reactions after the battle and the relief he felt were not recorded in the Bible.

Many years must have passed after this memorable incident and Abram became Abraham. Then one day, there came three strange visitors to Abraham’s house (tent) and one of them was God Himself and the other two were His angels. They came to him with two different messages. The first one was that Abraham and his wife Sarai would have a child in one year’s time. The second message was that they were going to destroy Sodom and Gomorah for their wickedness and immoral activities. Here the second point appeared to be unusual because nowhere in the Bible God consulted human beings like Abraham for implementing divine decisions and actions like destruction of Sodom and Gomorah.

Actually, there is no need of informing Abraham, about God’s plan of destruction except one reason that Lot was residing in one of the cities God wished to destroy. There is no doubt Abraham must have been afraid of any untoward thing happen to his relative Lot, but he became more compassionate about the sinful people of the two cities. And the two angels must be on their way to the cities to take action in time leaving God with Abraham. Then Abraham seized the opportunity and talked with God about the destiny of those two cities.

In a sanctified nature of courage and humility Abraham planned to save them who were doomed for their wickedness. So he said “Wilt thou also destroy righteous with the wicked?” Abraham was seriously thinking if there was any possibility to save at least some like Lot. Again Abraham asked God, “If there were at least 50 righteous men, would you spare the cities?” To that God replied “yes” The bargain continued and God listened to Abraham patiently and finally accepted the proposal that if He found at least 10 righteous men, He would spare both the cities.

We don't have any authentic information, how many years must have elapsed between Lot and Abraham's separation and when this chapter began. Anyway the two angels came to the cities, Sodom and Gomorah, in the evening time, and Lot was already there at the gate of the and greeted them. During the days of the Bible, it is said the judges used to sit at the city gates to show themselves and Lot must have done the same at that time. So, as soon as, he saw the two angels entering the city premises, he whole heartedly invited them to his house. But initially, they did not accept his invitation and said they would remain in the street only. Lot continued his invitation because he wanted to honour them by washing their feet, and keeping them in his house that night perhaps, he did not understand they were angels sent by God on some important work.

Lot must be under the impression that those two persons were only his fellow Sodomites. There was still some righteousness in Lot and due to that he was able to treat and honour the God's people (the angels). So far we have studied only about the people of Sodom and Gomorah who were most wicked and committed great sin. Now we are going to see them in their true colours in wickedness. As Lot went on requesting them to go to his house, they finally accepted his invitation and about to enter the house. Immediately this news about the strange guests spread like wild fire in the city.

As a result, both young and oldmen surrounded the house of Lot and demanded that the strange guests must be brought out of the house to have sex with them. This kind of inhuman behaviour indicated their true nature and severity of wickedness. At the same time, we can estimate in what kind of society Lot was dwelling with his two innocent daughters. The despicable actions of those people were more than enough proof to justify God's wrath and the punishment He was going to grant them. They forgot completely about the

true sense of morality honour and decency. They embraced immorality and unpardonable wickedness.

When Lot saw the wicked men were going towards his house he immediately rushed and closed the door. Then he spoke with them in a humble way, if any proof is needed to expose the corruption of Lot's righteousness let us study his shocking counter offer to such immoral and notorious sinners of Sodom. He politely told them "Behold now I have two daughters who did not know man so far and if you really wanted I will bring them for your immoral activity." He requested the public not to think of any evil towards the strangers. But Lot did not understand those two were powerful angels who could defend themselves from any type of danger.

Even then we have to meditate upon one technical point. Lot did not mind to offer his daughters for adulterous actively in order to save the sanctity of the angels from the sinful men. In this context two contradictory ideas would come to our minds. Lot who lived with Abraham previously would never have continued that kind of thinking, at the same time Lot after he became an honoured citizen of Sodom, lost a great deal of his righteous reasoning.

Surprisingly the Sodomites became more violent against Lot. They threatened him by saying that they were planning to do more harm to him than to the angels. Then one of the angel's came to the door, where Lot was holding and pushed his hand out and immediately inflicted the vicious crowd with blindness. And because of that they felt very difficult to locate the door. All the sodomites were simply wondered at this miracle done by one of the angels. The blind men tried to find out the angel who made them blind but in vain.

The threatening nature of sodomites came to an end, as the angels were going to be in action. Before they started their work they talked with Lot. They said "Hast thou there any beside? Sons-in-law thy sons and thy daughters and whatever thou hast in the city bring them out of this place". The angles wanted to save the family members of Lot. It is because of the blessings God had showered upon him as he was the relative of Abraham. The relatives of Lot were also offered the same treatment as long as they had connections with him. They would be shown grace and mercy and permitted to flee from the wrath of God.

Lot at once went into the house and summoned his sons-in-law. At this stage we as readers might get one doubt whether Lot's daughters were married already or simply engaged at that time. Whatever might be the situation Lot humbly requested them to leave that city with him at once. But the people were joking at Lot. Anyway this episode appeared to be tragic on two levels.

It appeared the response of the sons-in-law to the call of Lot was only out of ignorance of them about the God of Lot as they were heathens. As we know the God of Lot always expects righteousness and holiness from his children whereas those sodomites were completely different from the society of Lot. Those sodomites were mostly connected to homosexuality. Unfortunately or fortunately Lot could not become a direct witness for his sons-in-law to understand his God. So, this difference clearly showed to the dual personality of Lot by saying that he put one foot in this world affairs and the other in heaven. There is no doubt that we can find many dual personalities among modern Christians like Lot.

At last the morning came and the wrath of God was going to be poured upon the two cities. But Lot's family members were not ready to leave that place and flee because they were accustomed to comfortable life style which was not allowing them to leave that place in spite of impending doom a of head. The angels understood the pulse of Lot's family members. The angels caught hold, the hands of Lot, his wife and two daughters and dragged them by force out of the city. Finally the family members were given one remarkable command by the angels look not behind thee..... lest thou be consumed. The wrath of angry God was the most fearful thing men can never imagine its severity. That terrible wrath was finally poured down and there is no question of escaping by anybody. Then God sent continuous rain of brimstone and fire from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorah. We have to remember one thing here that it was not some violent thunderstorm that we get now and then that might stop after some time or pass to another region. It was the wrath of God descending from heaven only with some purpose of destroying the heathens and their polluted cities. So, it would continue till the consummation of the last human being is done.

God completely destroyed the two cities the plain the inhabitants of the cities and all that grew on earth without any consideration. So, the judgement of God at any time is inescapable. The most surprising thing was that nothing

survived, whether it was man, or animal or plants on the surface of that entire area. According to historical information the rain of brimstone and fire flew down and settled in the “Dead Sea” which is near by the two cities, because it is about twelve hundred feet below the sea level. Lot and his two daughters simply obeyed the command of the angels not to look back, but the matriarch of the family (Lots wife) was not as obedient and loyal as her husband.

She looked back out of curiosity and became “a pillar of salt” God gave his judgement for her disloyalty. At this stage the readers may get a genuine doubt regarding her turning back. Whether Lots wife had a quick glance, at the burning city Sodom and received instant judgement from God for disobeying His command of her curiosity prompted her to know what was going on at her back. Whatever might be the motive behind this episode she looked back against the command of the angel and became a “pillar of salt.” She did not care for the words of God because she already became a part and parcel of that polluted society. Her own selfish choice made her disobey God and perished in the corrupted life of her fellow citizens.

Just at that time Abraham heard the commotion and witnessed the pathetic scene from a distance. It appeared to him as a horrible destruction of both men and cities. We can imagine only how Abraham must have shed tears at the desolate condition of the cities. Because he himself tried his best to convince God to save those two cities. The story of Lot remained in the Bible as one of the examples for God’s anger at the wickedness of the people of Sodom and Gomorah. When God got angry at the wickedness of people during the time of Noah, he destroyed them with flood. And when God got angry at the wickedness of the people of Sodom and Gomorah He destroyed them with brimstone and fire.

In this context we are reminded of the mercy of God towards the family of Lot because he was the close relative of Abraham. And it came to pass-when God destroyed both Sodom and Gomorah he remembered Abraham and sent Lot’s family from out of the cursed place in order to save them. One of the hardest passages in the Bible is the tragic culmination of Lot’s living in that cursed and wicked society.

After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorah, Lot had to live with his two daughters in a town of “Zoar” temporarily because that was also in the hit list of God for its immoral activities. Therefore, Lot was afraid of that place for

dwelling with his young daughters. Having understood the worse conditions of 'Zoar' also, he had decided to flee from that place to the mountains and take shelter in a cave.

Lot's family was then completely isolated from the polluted society. They became pained and desperate, when they thought of their future family legacy their future lack of family descendants forced the two sisters to hatch master plan; but a crooked plan as they were living in an isolated place. They understood that no man would come to such a lonely place, either to marry them or to live with them in future. So, they decided to make a future plan by themselves and for themselves. Then one day the elder daughter took her younger sister to a lonely place and told her come, let us make our father drink wine and we will lie with him that we may preserve seed of our father" (Genesis 19-32).

This illicit plan of the two sisters was no doubt inhuman and diabolical in nature and only animals will do such things as they cannot distinguish between good and bad. If we meditate upon this particular point for a while it appears that their intention was only for the continuation of the seed or genealogy of their father but no sexual thirst. But such unnatural and abnormal things would happen freely in Sodom and Gomorah. We can also guess to certain extent that the way of life in those cities must have influenced them as they lived with those people for some years. Their way of life no doubt caused these two sisters to come to that decision of sleeping with their father as such things were common among Sodomites.

Making plans is quite different from implementing them. As far as the daughters were concerned here there was no such problem to put their plan into action, and let us see how they could succeed in their master plan. "And they made their father drink wine that night and the first born went in and lay with her father and he perceived not." When she lay down nor when she arose (genesis 19 : 33). Generally taking a bit of wine at dinner time in some families is common and may be a custom also. But in the case of Lot, drinking wine at that time appeared to be more than normal which caused him to be abnormal and unable to remember what he did really at that time.

With this incident, we can presume that Lot was in the habit of taking excessive quantity of alcohol, at certain times. The most important thing in the plan of elder daughter was to make her father drink heavily, so that the sisters would be successful in their plan. And they succeeded wonderfully and put

their plan into action in the same night just after a few hours of their plan. We can also guess that while living a comfortable life in Sodom Lot also must have definitely allowed that strange behaviour of the people to get a foot hold into his household. The elder sister who had already done her part to preserve the seed of her father, urged the younger sister to do the same. She too followed the same procedure and became successful. The result of that remarkable incident was that both became pregnant by their father. At this juncture we are not aware of the reaction of Lot when he came to know that he made his own daughters pregnant by his beastly behaviour.

The scriptures also did not record any details regarding the feelings and humiliation experienced by Lot during that critical times. He came to know he was responsible for that beastly act of making his daughters pregnant. Let us recollect the whole story again how Lot started his journey from 'Ur' the land of Chaldies who were with his uncle Abraham who was destined to be called the father of divinely chosen nation (Israel). But the destiny of Lot was different. He preferred to live with heathens knowingly or unknowingly even after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorah. His decision to live with heathens came from within.

The two sons that Lot fathered through his two daughters became fathers to two different tribes called the "Moabites" and the "Ammonites" who later became founders of two heathen nations and who finally remained as the deadliest enemies to God chosen people Israelites according to Biblical history. After studying the life of Lot a different picture would come to our minds. And we may get the same picture when we look into the description of Apostle Peter about Lot. He was disgusted with the filthy conversation and immoral conduct of the wicked men. For Lot being relative to the righteous man Abraham dwelling among such men by seeing and hearing their nature of talk, all those things, vexed his righteous soul day by day with their unlawful deeds. It was like the life of Samson. Who found a place in the "Hall of faith." The readers may search to find out something in the life of Lot. In this condition what apostle Peter wanted to say is that, Lot in his heart of hearts was a man who loved God and accepted Him as a creator of the universe. But to his bad luck he was placed in the society that made his righteous living into immoral living and the same society not only polluted Lot, but also his two innocent daughters.

Finally Lot became a slave to the bad conditions like social, moral and cultural activities of that wicked heathen society. In the same way, we can find

now a days many Christian friends walking in the foot prints of our Lot without any priority or realization and repentance for their wrong doings knowingly or unknowingly. It will be a shocking news sometimes whenever we hear about some pastors or church elders if they walk in a wrong track and degrade themselves morally. It is quite but natural, we are often discouraged and dejected in our moral failures. But we have to realize one thing in our real life that whatever we love to do in this world must be acceptable to God Almighty. Then only we can be successful in our life.

In our hearts we know that we love to do what is right in the sight of God and aim at that only to please Him. But very often we find ourselves going into the pressure of the society and become slaves to its conditions. It is a fact, as man struggles within himself to do or not to do certain things. In the same way all the believers must have to struggle and experience in their life time.

Lot also struggled with the same type of problems about 4,000 years ago in the Bible. Still we have to accept Lot as a righteous man. It is quite appropriate to quote the words of Apostle Paul in this context. He said "For as by one mans disobedience many were made sinners so by the obedience of one (Jesus) shall many be made righteous (Romans 5: 19) so to say, we are also as righteous as Lot living with the corrupted people of the world. Let us try to learn some lessons as God intended for us from the great people like Lot, Samson and David from the Bible.

May God bless all the readers and help them to live up to the righteous standard of living. God has freely and graciously established a glorious life for us and in adverse conditions. We must flee away from such things of immediately. Let us, not become victims to evil temptations in our day to day life. Amen.





DAVIDIC DYNASTIC RULERS PART – 1

The Temple of our Lord was not like the common shrine. It was more than that. It was meant for the worship of our God as it was a Holy place of the Lord. So, it was called by the devotees “The House of God.” According to scriptures our God has about 80 names like “EL EL YON” (Hebrew), which means (the most High God). This God wished to stay with His chosen people, Israelites. Therefore, He asked Moses to build a ‘Trisham’ (Hebrew) which means tabernacle a Mobile Temple, when they were in Senai mountain wilderness. After about 480 years of this tabernacle the first immovable temple was built by king Solomon on Mount Zion, one of the mountain ranges of Mount Morea. He spent money lavishly and took seven years for completing the House of God the Temple of Jerusalem.

But king Solomon sinned against God though he was abundantly blessed. The punishment for his sin was division of his empire into two parts, the northern kingdom of Judah with Jerusalem as its capital and the southern kingdom of Israel with Samaria as its capital. After his death Rehoboam became the king of Judah and with him started Davidic dynastic rule.

FIRST KING - REHOBAM: After he became the king he also followed his father in idol worship and walked against God. So in the fifth year of his reign God put him in the hands of an Egyptian king, Sheshak as a punishment. He attacked Jerusalem, destroyed the city and the Temple partially and went away with gold and silver. Then after sometime the king of Babylon Nebuchadnezzar was used by God as an instrument to punish Jews and he attacked Judah in three stages, in 606 B.C. 593 B.C. and 586 B.C. In his third attack the king almost razed the city and the Temple. He made Jerusalem a desolate place. Apart from that he took many Jews as captives to Babylon. The exiled Jews experienced hardship for seventy years as proclaimed by God. Later some of them under the leadership of Zerubbabel, who was appointed as the governor of Judah by king Cyrus, returned to Jerusalem with about 43,630 people. As soon as they returned Zerubbabel and Joshua tried to rebuild the Temple.

My prime aim of writing this article is to bring to lime light the chronological history of the first Temple of king Solomon during the reign of Davidic rulers who were from “Davidic royal dynasty.” Only these rulers would have that authority because of the covenant God made with David that only

his descendants should rule His chosen people Israel. As all those rulers were the lineage of David the Messiah should be the descendant of David.

King Solomon, at later part of his life, turned away his heart from the true God in spite of the blessings he received. He turned toward heathen gods because of his too many heathen wives. He built shrines to please them at the end of mount of Olives and at Baalbeck and later the same mountain was called "The place of corruption."

In such a condition Rehoboam became the first king of Judah of Davidic dynastic rule at the age of 41. He ruled for seventeen years. The Holy Temple of God remained in Jerusalem, the capital city of Judahn empire and Jeroboam after he became the king of Israel, did not allow his people to go to Jerusalem for any annual functions or meetings at the Holy Temple. He stopped them forever and built two shrines and kept two golden calves one in Bethel and the other in Dan for idol worship. Jeroboam practised aposotatic worship system to his people in order to prevent them from going to pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The archeological remains of the Northern Temple of Jeroboam are in existence even today at the sight of "Tel Dan."

King Jeroboam also created replacement sacrifices during the holy days and established regular priesthood at the high places for the demons. The worship of "Yehweh" was nothing but for him a perverted one and no way comparable to the true and living God. Faithful devotees, priest and levities of the Lord who were in Israel left their homes and properties and returned to Judah to serve and worship the true God. This brief information would be enough to give the idea that the Temples of Jeroboam were only perverted replacement of the true worship of our God. As a matter of fact, -

1. Our true and living God does not want to be worshipped as an image.
2. There was only divinely authorized Temple on Mount Zion which God chose eternally.
3. The Temple of Jerusalem was the only one where anybody could perform sacrifices and offerings.

Rehoboam and Judah served the Lord only for three years and the kingdom was in progress during that time. But from the fourth year of his regime Rehoboam forsook God. The result was God imposed immediate punishment in the fifth year by inviting Egyptian king Sheshak who came with the force of 60000 horsemen, 1200 chariots and a large number of infantry. He

crushed 15 noted cities of Judah but did not make much loss to Jerusalem and the Temple. His attack was primarily on economic basis. King Solomon used to receive massive wealth via Maris trade route and with the war this was taken away by king Sheshak.

This was the pitiable condition of Jerusalem and the Temple during the reign of king Rehoboam. At that time prophet Shamoiah rebuked Judah's royal house. He clearly pointed out that invasion of Sheshak over Judah was due to the abandonment of the Lord by Jews and now God abandoned them and then put them in the hands of Sheshak. The words of prophet softened the hearts of Jews. They became humble before God and He saved them and Jerusalem. The Temple remained for 35 years without its wealth. King Solomon tutored his sons about godly wisdom. In the same way Rehoboam tutored his sons the spiritual principles that "righteousness exalteth the nation but sin is a reproveth to any people." (Proverbs 14:34) The judgment of God came upon the nation because Judah's with king Rehoboam ignored to follow His righteousness. The positive and negative explanation of this truth has been experienced at many stages throughout Judah's history.

SECOND KING – ABIJAM: The second king in the order was Abijam. He was also called Abijah or Abia who ruled Judah just for three years. His mother was the grand daughter of David's rebellious son, Absalom's daughter Tamar. Absalom's daughter encouraged idolatry and influenced negative spiritual approach on her son. So he too abandoned God and walked on the footprints of his father. Still, God was kind toward him and postponed His judgment to see if there was any possibility of repentance in him because of David. At that time, Judah and Israel were already different countries. They developed enmity between themselves and also indulged in wars. Abijam went to war against Israel with 400,000 army where as Jeroboam with 800,000. Before the war started Abijam addressed Israel. He insulted them by saying that they had abandoned the Lords Temple by embracing the golden calves but the Judahs had faithfully continued Temple worship. So "God Himself is with us and our captain." (2 Chronicles 13:12)

He, at last, asked Israel to stop rebellion and reconcile with God and with Judah. The words of Abijam did not change the minds of Israelites. So when the war was about to be commenced a group of Temple priests sounded the battle alarm with their Temple ram horn trumpets and finally got a remarkable victory because they depended upon God only. Jeroboam's power was totally

damaged and about 500,000 men were killed in the battle. The outcome of the war was that Judah could have control over Ephraim, the Southern part of Israel kingdom for many years. It is not the size of the army that brings the victory over the enemy but it is the efficiency of the captain and in this case God Himself played the role of a captain to the army of Abijam.

THIRD KING - ASa: The third king of Davidic dynastic rule was ASa. He was the son of Abijam. He ruled Judah for 41 years. He was a righteous king. In the Bible also it is said briefly “and ASa did that which was right in the eyes of Lord as did David his father.” (1 kings 15:11). ASa in his early days prayed to God and God miraculously delivered Judah from Ethiopia’s one million men invasion. After the wonderful victory, prophet Azariah met ASa and promised him “The Lord is with you and ye be with Him and if ye seek Him He will be found of you but if you forsake Him He will forsake you.” (2 chronicles 15:2).

ASa became obedient and followed the prophet. He brought total spiritual reformation in the kingdom of Judah. He cleaned the land from Sodomites who promoted perversion and paganism. He removed the images which were installed and patronized by his father and grandfather. ASa also removed his grandmothers image as a queen who was the wife of Rehoboam for her idolatry. He transferred all the treasures from the royal palace to the Temple of God that came as gifts of God. Some of them were his own and some others belonged to his fathers. He renovated the spiritual system in the Temple. These wonderful changes he made brought peace and prosperity to his nation and also the spiritual reforms he did brought many Israelites into his fold. All these radical changes he made in his kingdom and among the Jewish people, caused hostility in Israelites as they forgot their living God and became idol worshippers.

This situation came after many years of perfect calmness. At that time “Bausha” was the king of Israel kingdom. He entered into the Southern territory of Judah kingdom and began to fortify. His main purpose was to stop any pilgrimage of his people to the Holy Temple of Jerusalem. He even kept some army men on the borders to prevent his people from entering into Judah, especially on religious matters, which caused a threat to Judah and the people.

As time passed, ASa became a changed man. He lost faith in God. He became proud of himself and did not want to depend upon God for anything. In desperation he confiscated treasures of the Temple and the royal palace. He gave them to the king of Syria for his help and friendship. God watched all that and sent the prophet “Hanani” to ASa to remind him that he forgot God and

depended upon the army of Syria to deal with his problems. He became adamant to the warning of the prophet and imprisoned him immediately. God judged Asa for his arrogancy and gifted him with a fatal disease to his legs. Again instead of praying to God for his healing, he looked for a physician. Finally, he became unrighteous and ended his life miserably.

FOURTH KING - JEHOSEPHAT: The fourth king was Jehosapat. He ruled Judah for 25 years. He was no doubt a righteous man, but allowed idolatrous high priests to live with people. He wiped out some of the pagan worship but not completely. The king loved God very much and gave many valuable things to the Temple. Religious reformation was his top priority. He realized that his people did not know much about the worship of God. So, in the third year of his reign, sent his princes, priests and Levites throughout the country to teach the law of God to his people from the Temple scroll of Deuteronomy.

But he lost all his reputation by one foolish act. He compromised with Ahab the heathen king of Northern kingdom of Israel through marriage between his eldest son and Ahab's daughter Athaliah. This marriage alliance between his son and the heathen woman Athaliah caused a spiritual devastation which continued for some decades. Ahab forced Jehosapat to support him in war against Syria which occupied Israelites city "Ramath Gilead" but he said he would consult his God. Then Ahab brought some false prophets who wrongly prophesized great victory Jehosapat did not have faith in Ahab's prophets and he found another true prophet of God who gave correct judgment against wicked people like Ahab who died miserably in the battle as the prophet anticipated.

In the later years, desert tribes like Moabites and Ammonites invaded Southern Judah. The king immediately ordered for fasting and gathered all people in the Temple of God. The king invoked the dedication prayer of the forefathers like Solomon and God replied with a message of comfort. "Be not afraid for the battle is not yours but God's." (1 Chronicle 20:15). Jehosapat and other bowed down their heads before the stone pavement and worshipped the Lord. The king marched to the battlefield led by the Levite choir singing parties to the Lord and the Lord confused the enemy. They destroyed themselves and the Judahn army returned home with great victory followed by the Temple music.

The Jewish people then understood that their God was the true captain of all battles.

FIFTH KING - JEHORAM: After this incident the eldest son of Jehosopat and son-in-law of Ahab called Jehoram became the fifth king of Judah. Then he took some immediate steps for the betterment of his kingdom but his wife was a heathen woman. She influenced him and changed him toward heathen gods like Baal the favorite of his wife Athaliah. He built many high places in Judah. Still God did not punish him because of His covenant with David.

This sudden change in the character of Jehoram made the prophet Elijah of Northern kingdom to send a written message of prophecy. It is the Lord of David prompted a judgment upon Jehoram because of his idolatry and murders. As a result, Jehoram's wives and sons would be killed except the lost son. Jehoram had to be smitten by an incurable bowel disease that finally took away his life. The prophecy of Elijah was fulfilled and after his death he was not honored with state burial in Royal Tombs.

SIXTH KING – AHAZIAH: He was the youngest son of Jehoram and Athaliah. The other brothers, according to prophecy, were already killed by foreign invaders. Ahaziah gave gifts to the Temple treasury because it was a customary by Judah's king's but he did that only for political advantage. As usual he also became faithless in the living God of Judah since his mother trained him like that. So, he followed his mother and did evil in the sight of God. Ahaziah ruled only for one year before he was killed. He made a tragic alliance with his uncle Joram, king of Israel for his own down fall in war against Syria.

Ahaziah happened to visit his uncle Joram who was recovering from the injuries after the war. "Jehu" the military general seized this opportunity. He was anointed as the king of Israel secretly. Joram and Ahaziah went to Jehu on their royal chariot to greet him for his able guidance in the war. But Jehu killed Joram with an arrow and his loyalists pursued Ahaziah and mortally wounded him. At last Ahaziah also died at the fortress of Megido and he was buried in Jerusalem. Jehu had a strong lurking desire to eliminate all the family members of Ahab. But he could assassinate only forty two of them among the killed there were some relatives of Ahaziah also.

SEVENTH KING – ATHALIAH : After the death of Ahaziah his mother, Athaliah became the queen of Judah as the seventh ruler. We read already that she was born to Ahab, the most wicked king of Israel. As soon as she occupied

the throne, she recollected how her son was killed. She took revenge and killed all the princes of Davidic dynasty. However, her grandson 'Joash' escaped her slaughter and he was the only survival of Davidic throne. The aunt of Joash his fathers sister with the cooperation of the high priest Jehoiada saved him by keeping secretly in the Temple for one year.

The high priest planned after six years to overthrow Athaliah and reinstate Davidic ruler. He confidently arranged five efficient military generals of Judah's to gather Levites and tribal leaders to the Temple. Then the priests armed the Levites and some soldiers to stand as the bodyguards to the youngest prince. With all the formalities the coronation function of the king took place at the king's platform by the side of bronze altar. The high priest Jehoiada put the crown on the head of seven year old king Joash and gave him the Deuteronomy scroll from the "Holy of Holies" as a testimony to God's law.

While the sons of the high priest were anointing Joash, the Temple trumpets sounded and others shouted "God save the king." Athaliah happened to hear all that and immediately attacked them with her supporters but in vain. She was caught, brought outside the Temple and killed. The people then destroyed the Temple of Baal which was built by Athaliah in honor of her father Ahab. They also killed Mattan the priest of Baalim. Everything was done correctly in the sight of God and the Almighty God must have rejoiced at the great task of restoring Davidic rule again. Athaliah actually planned to establish her family rule of heathens. She hated the Lord. Her crooked plan was to discontinue Davidic dynastic rule and close the Holy Temple and it brought her downfall. God gave her a great gift for her cunning nature the gift of death and total destruction of Baal Temple.

EIGHTH KING - JOASH: He was the son of Ahaziah and the eighth king of Judah. He was also called Jehoash. He ruled for 40 years with the influence of Jehoiada the high priest. Joash walked with God and did some reforms in Judah. During his time the Temple was in a poor condition, which needed urgent repairs. It was desecrated by Athaliah and her sons. They had broken the House of God and stripped off its dedicated things and kept them in the Temple of Baal. Joash felt extremely sorry for that unhappy situation and commanded Jehoiada to send Levites all over the nation to collect half shekel as Temple annual tax according to the law of Moses.

The Levites could not come in time with their collections. So, Joash ordered to keep a box in the Temple for some freewill offerings. Since it was for

the purpose of God the amount they received was more than enough not only for Temple repair but also to purchase some gold and silver vessels for the Temple. As a matter of fact, Jehoiada played an important role to reestablish Davidic dynastic rule and to renovate the Holy Temple. He was actually uncle to Joash. He lived for 130 years. When he died he was given the highest honor of burial in the royal tombs.

Joash remained righteous and followed God as long as the high priest lived. After his death Joash was influenced by his heathen wives who left the House of the Lord of their forefathers and began to serve groves and idols. Jehoiada's son Zecharias became the priest after his father. He was also a good prophet. He prophesized against Joash apostasy for telling the truth Joash mercilessly killed Zecharias and other sons of his and uncle priest Jehoiada. The death of Zecharias took place on the Temple premises by means of stones. Jesus Christ also commented at this gruesome murder by saying "From the blood of Abel and to the blood of Zecharias which perished between the altar and the Temple verily I say unto you shall be required of this generation." (Luke 11:21).

According to the saying, "What we sow we reap." The judgment came upon Joash at once from foreign invaders like Syrians. A small company of Syrian soldiers attacked Jerusalem and killed many Judah's and their leaders. Joash understood the situation and in his desperate position sent most of the Temple's treasure to the king of Syria. Then he fell ill seriously. While he was recovering his own servants killed him on his bed in the palace. He was just 47 years old at that time. But he was not buried in the royal tombs. All those happenings and calamities were the result of divine retribution for Joash's murder of Zecharias the prophet and the priest.

NINETH KING - AMAJIAH was the ninth king of Judah. He occupied the throne at the age of 25. Soon after he became the king the first step he took was he killed all the people who were responsible for the death of his father Joash. He followed the righteous way of life in the beginning like previous kings but not wholeheartedly. He increased military strength to 300,000 soldiers. In addition to that, he hired an extra 100,000 Israelite mercenaries to support him in wars with the Edomites. When Amaziah was about to display his army a prophet of God came to him. He warned the king that he would be defeated if he used the idolatrous Israelites in the war. He honored the prophet's words and stopped the Israelites but allowed them to keep the contract price in silver.

Amaziah got wonderful victory over the Edomites. But the grumbling Israelites ransacked murdered and spoiled the unprotected cities of Judah while returning to their places. Later Amaziah became a changed man like other kings after he got victory. He proved his ungratefulness toward God who really protected him. He brought back the idols to Jerusalem and began to worship. Then God warned Amaziah through prophet to repent for his foolishness. He paid a deaf ear to the warning and continued his way of life. He abandoned God and the Temple. Just at that time, he declared a war against Israel and he was utterly defeated as he openly ignored God. After the war Israel king Jehoash forced Amaziah to open the gates of Jerusalem. He plundered the city looted the Temple of its gold and silver and went to Samaria.

TENTH KING – UZZIAH: He was the tenth king of Judah. He was also called Azariah. He became the king when he was 17 years old. He ruled for 52 years the longest period of all Judean kings. He lived as a righteous man but did not remove the high places. He sincerely worked for the unity of nation for strength and prosperity. God allowed his progress as long as he did not forget God. He made some wonderful changes in his kingdom. He increased military in all angles for the betterment of the nation.

But he committed one unpardonable sin. It was in connection with the Temple. He lifted his eyes in pride because of the prosperity of the nation and on the day of the feast he went into the Holy of Holies to burn the incense at the golden altar before the veil. All that service was supposed to be done by the priests only. While he was doing that the high priest along with 80 other priests objected and humbly, requesting the king not to commit sin. But Uzziah became adamant and threatened them that he would kill all.

God judged him immediately and struck him with leprosy on his forehead. Since then he never entered the Temple of God. He lived in a house outside the city. Then his son Jotham ruled the country as a primary head. When he died he was buried in the palace garden but not in the royal tombs of Davidic ancestors. Uzziah's tomb inscription was discovered in 1931 in a Russian orthodox convent on the Mount of Olives. We can see that stone even today in Israel's museum in the following words. "To this place the remains of Uzziah king of Judah were placed. Do not disturb." During the reign of Jehosopat a massive earthquake occurred (Amos 1:1) which must have caused a heavy damage even to the Temple. But one of the commentators namely Josephus linked the time of that earthquake to Uzziah's entry into the Temple "A great earthquake shook the ground and a rent (crack) was made in the Temple wall and bright rays of

the sun shone through it and fell upon the king's face so much that the leprosy came upon his forehead immediately and before the city at a place called 'Eroze' half of the mountain was broken off the rest on the west and moved itself four furlongs and stood still at the last mountain (antiquities 9.10.14). The earthquake of Uzziah's days was so severe that the future earthquake which will split the Mount of Olives at the Messiah's return is linked to it.

At that time prophet Isaiah was there. He started his ministry at the end of the reign of Uzziah. Prophet Isaiah happened to become a number of royal family and so he was authorized to write the biography of Uzziah. During the year of Uzziah's death Isaiah received a vision in the Temple. He saw the Lord high and lifted up sitting on His throne and surrounded by Seraphim angels who cried out Holy Holy Holy.

ELEVENTH KING – JOTHAM: He was the son of Uzziah who ruled Judah for seventeen years in Jerusalem. Prior to that he ruled with his father Uzziah jointly for thirteen years because his father was suffering from leprosy and he was not allowed to come out to the public. After he became a full fledged king he took up the work of national fortification which was unfinished by his father and strengthened the wall of Jerusalem that defended the "Ophel" area which was just South of the Temple. In addition to that he built cities on the mountains of Judah and the fortress castles and towns.

He waged wars with Ammonites when they rebelled. He defeated them and brought Ammon into the domain of Judah. A signet ring that belonged to Jotham was unearthed in Eilat in 1941 which indicated how that Southern coast was so important during the reign of Jotham. In his developing program he gave top priority to the House of the Lord. He took necessary steps for its strong defense. Josephus the historian said that Jotham had taken special care for the foundations of cloisters which means part of cathedral covenant or monastery in the Temple (antiquities 1.11.1).

TWELTH KING - AHAZ: He was the son of Jotham, the twelfth king of Judah. He proved himself as the most wicked king. He sinned like other Israel kings by serving Phoenician false god Baal. It is said, this king sacrificed his own children in the valley called Him-nan. He spread the worship of Baal, Morach and many other idols in Judah like a deadly cancer. He built many pagan altars in Jerusalem in all cities of Judah. In such conditions Israel and Syria joined together and revolted against Assyria. They requested the cooperation of Ahaz also but he refused their request. His negative answer forced Israel to declare

war against Judah. Israel's master plan was to wipe out Davidic dynastic rule and install some puppet government. This news caused Davidic family and Ahaz feel much and he made sacrifices to appease Syrian gods.

In such a critical situation, prophet Isaiah brought a message from God to Ahaz stating that Israel and Syria alliance would not occupy Judah and Jerusalem. But there was a clear warning from God to Ahaz "if ye will not believe sincerely ye shall not be established." (Isaiah 7:9) Unfortunately his pride made him blind to the warning of God. So the royal house bluntly rejected the Word of God and looked for the confirmation from someone. Anyway, Ahaz for his foolishness and stupidity received correct judgment from God for his supporting heathen gods. The result of war was horrible. Many of his officials were killed. The important trade revenue and the regional influence were grabbed. His son, the future king, along with the chief of the staff and the prime minister were also killed. Syria captured the Southern port city of Eilat. In the East the Edomites took away many Judahn's as captives.

In the west the philistines seized the lower hill country and cut off trade route. They also occupied Mediterranean port cities. Judah's war casualties were most alarming. Israel killed about 120,000 soldiers in one day battle and took about 200,000 civilians as captives. Israel and Syria seized Jerusalem but they could not take it at the end as it was the city of God. Like Israel Syria also took many Jewish people as captives.

Ahaz now became bankrupt. He strooped down to the level of searching for a small change of money. He desperately stripped off all the gold and silver from the Temple of God and gave it to the king of Assyria to support him against Syria and Israel. He introduced idolatrous altar into the Holy Temple and proclaimed that all the sacrifices must be done on that altar only. Ahaz did everything against God and finally he closed the Temple building. With this hasty step, the national worship was stopped. The menorah was no longer lit, the shrew bread no longer displayed and the incense no longer burnt in the Temple.

In 721 B.C. the Assyrians defeated Israel two years before the death of Ahaz and much of the population was deported to different parts of the country. Then regarding Ahaz he provoked God throughout his reign and made Him angry. When he died he was not buried in the royal tombs. He did not repent till his death and that was the tragic end of king Ahaz.

THIRTEENTH KING - HEZEKIAH: He became the thirteenth king of Judah. He was 24 years old and ruled for 29 years. An astonishing “clay bulla” or seal for official documents was discovered which bore Hezekiah’s royal seal with the following words “Hezekiah son of Ahaz king of Judah”. He loved God and lived according to His will. He used to say “Jehoweh is my strength”, and scriptures also provided an amazing commentary about him. “He trusted in the Lord God of Israel.” So that after him there was none like him among all kings of Judah because he clave unto the Lord and departed not from following Him.” (2 kings 18: 5-6).

King Hezekiah’s first act was to reestablish God’s Temple with all requirements which his father took away including priesthood. His apostatic father heavily damaged the sanctity of the Temple. So the king appointed priests and Levites for the purification of the Temple and it was done on time. He reinstated everything that was stopped by his father and then he thought about the spiritual condition of his people and how they forgot the God of their forefathers.

They turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord. He restarted the “Passover” feast which brought sweeping revival. The king invited all including Israelites to that function. It was a unique celebration never seen either before or after king Solomon’s dedication of the Temple. Their humble prayer came upon God’s Holy Temple. Hezekiah used all his efforts for the abolition of all kinds of idolatry. He destroyed all the Temples and images built for the Phoenician god Baal and the wooden poles used for the worship of goddess Acherah. He destroyed the bronze serpent of Moses that was venerated by all people with incense. The total destruction of the high places was the greatest reform in his kingdom. He believed in God firmly for the security of his nation. So, “he rebelled against the king of Assyria and served him not.” He took some preventive measures for the safety and security of his nation. As he expected attack from Assyria at anytime he improved military in all angles. He took utmost care for the fortress cities and for the Jewish capital city Jerusalem.

There are two wonderful projects of Hezekiah that we can see them in Jerusalem even today, of course, as archeological ruins. They are the broad wall and tunnel. The broad wall was the new city wall Hezekiah built on the West and North of Jerusalem to enclose the strong Western hill. The length of that wall was more than a mile and it helped the enlargement of that city 500 %. Scripture also referred to it as broad wall. The width of that wall was about

23 feet thick and the height of it 27 feet so that it would withstand any hard bombardment by Assyrians or any enemy. The water supply to West town area was his next major problem. He solved that also by bringing water from “Gihan spring”, through the tunnel and it was named after him as “Hezekiah’s tunnel.” The water of that spring was also released for the “pool of siloam.” This Hezekiah’s tunnel could be seen today as one of the wonders of water engineering system of ancient world. The construction of this tunnel must have taken place about 2700 years ago. It was also the time of prophet Isaiah and the tunnel was almost in good condition even today.

Prophet Isaiah spoke about urgent preparation for water supply in Jerusalem and building of wall. “Ye have seen also the breaches in the city of David but there are many and yet gathered together the waters of lower pool. And yet have numbered the houses of Jerusalem and the houses ye broken down to fortify the wall.” When Hezekiah was in the 14th year of his reign as he anticipated the Assyrians attacked Judah and its fortified cities. Their plan was to seize Jerusalem but he reacted at once and sent some ambassadors to Assyria with some message to avert the devastation of the Holy city. The king of Assyria mocked at Hezekiah by saying that Assyrian god was greater and more powerful than Judah’s God but Hezekiah encouraged his people not to be disheartened at his foolish remarks. He consoled them and said the king of Assyria depended upon men’s strength where as the strength of Jews was God Himself and this God Almighty would fight any battle on their behalf. Then the king put the letter before God which was sent by Assyrian king and God answered through prophet Isaiah. Therefore saith the Lord concerning the Assyrian king “He shall not come to the city nor shoot an arrow there nor come before it with shield nor cast a bank against it for I will defend this city for mine own sake and for my servant David sake.”

Finally, it was not the massive wall that saved Jerusalem from Assyrian attack but the humble prayer of Hezekiah. The Lord protected and delivered Judah as He promised. The destroying angel of God struck down 850,00 enemy soldiers with plague. The Assyrian army terribly afraid of the position and withdrew from Judah. Just at that time Hezekiah fell ill and on the point of death. He humbly prayed to God and cried bitterly. God heard his humble prayer and extended his life for 15 years more. This unimaginable achievement and the miracle of God boosted the image of Hezekiah around the countries. The king of Babylon sent his envoys with gifts to congratulate him on his miraculous recovery.

The king's envoys were well treated. At this stage, Hezekiah did one foolish thing. He felt proud of his wealth and showed all that to those envoys. Prophet Isaiah came to know that and rebuked the king. He foretold that the Babylonian king one day would invade Judah and take away all he laid up in store. The Lord anyway honored Hezekiah in his death with a burial in the royal tombs.

FOURTEENTH KING – MANAS'SEH: He was the fourteenth king and son of Hezekiah. He ruled for 45 years. He was called the most unscrupulous king of all Judean kings. He totally reversed the spiritual system introduced by his righteous father. He committed more evils than all kings of Judah. His wickedness was more than even heathen Canaanites and all his acts were mentioned in the scripture. They are

1. Manas'seh rebuilt cultic centers which were destroyed by his father.
2. He built altars for Baal and goddess Acherah.
3. He worshipped the sun, moon and stars. He built altars for them in both the courts of the Holy Temple.
4. He kept a chariot and horses at the entrance of the courts for worship of the sun.
5. He polluted the Holy Temple in a most horrible way by keeping the image of heathen goddess Acherah at the Holy of Holies in the Temple.
6. He built houses for Sodomite priests that attended the shrines and altars.
7. He made his son to pass through the fire practiced divination observed astrology.

We can understand that the above said points are an abomination to God. Manas'seh became so rude and proud that he never tried to bend his head before the living God. He bluntly rejected the prophetic warnings regarding the security of the nation. He tried to silence many divine rebukes. He filled the streets of Jerusalem with the blood of prophets and righteous people. The commentator Josephus said "Martyrdom had become every day activity of Manas'seh reign."

According to Jewish history one of the noted martyrs was the aged prophet Isaiah. He was in one of his long prophetic ministry at that time. The Jews maintained in the record how Manas'seh killed the prophet Isaiah by cutting his body into two with the help of a wooden saw. Then God gave His judgment for all his cruel activities. The captains of Assyria took him to Babylon among the skin pearing hooks and bound him with fetters. It is said that

Manas'sseh repented in his captivity and turned his head toward God. The Babylonian authorities then released him and he went to Jerusalem. His repentance urged him to remove everything including the image of Acherah from the Temple and the regular worship was restored. But there is no authentic information about the repentance of Manas'sseh and the destruction of idols he installed.

FIFTEENTH KING – AMON: He was the son of Manas'sseh who became the king at the age of 22. As a king he followed his father regarding idol worship. According to Biblical history Amon made the sacrifices to all carved images which he prepared and served with devotion. He never humbled before the God of his forefathers. Amon transgressed more and more against the will of God. His reign continued only for two years and his servants happened to kill him on his bed in his palace. He was buried like his father only in the garden of the royal palace but not in the royal tombs.

What can be assessed about the Temple maintenance during the reign of those fifteen Davidic dynastic rulers in Judaic empire? – as far as we understand it was God's Holy Temple but this truth was not realized by the Jewish people including the kings. The Lord told king Solomon "I have hallowed this house to put my name forever and put my eyes and put mine heart shall be there perpetually?" (1 kings 9:3). God wished to dwell among men and the Temple was the testimony of Gods presence. If we study carefully the Biblical history we find that God's house became a test for the nation's spiritual litmus (test for the nation). Litmus here means changing of faith according to the conditions and conveniences. To be much clearer whenever the Temple was disregarded or desecrated it gave the impression that the Jewish people abandoned their true God and whenever the Temple was honored with due worship it reflected the nation's affection for Yehweh of their forefathers.

Kings of Davidic Dynasty



Rehoboam.



Abijam or Abija or Abia



ASa



Jehosopat.



Jehoram



Ahazeah



Athaliah



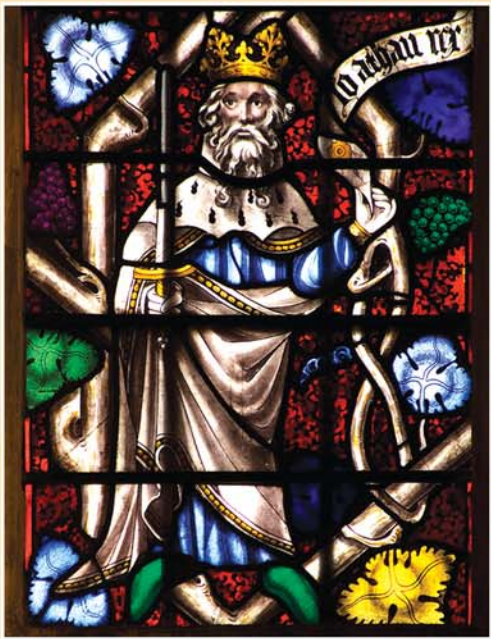
Joash



Amazeah



Uzziah



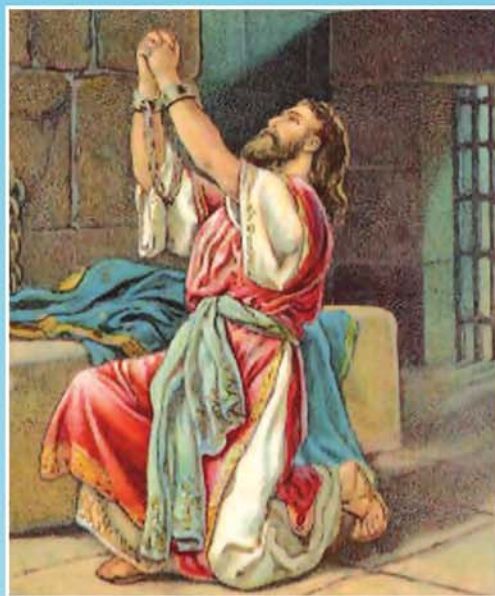
Jotham



Ahaz



Hezekiah



Manasseh



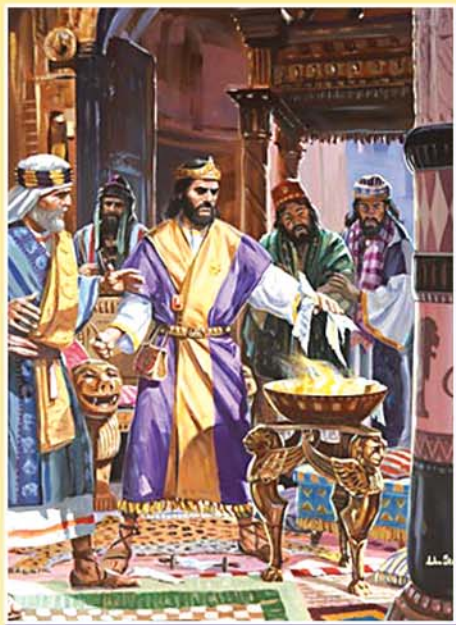
Amon



Josiah



Jehoiahuz



Jehoiakim



Jehoiachin



Zedekiah

DAVIDIC DYNASTIC RULERS PART – II

In the scriptures, the Lord's Temple is called "The House of the Lord" more than 200 times. It indicates God's desire to dwell among His chosen people on the earth. We know that, God dwelt with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and He will certainly dwell with His people again in future Messianic kingdom.

Let us see in this article, the remaining historical survey of the Temple during the last five kings of Davidic dynasty. Some information is already given about the condition of the Temple during the reign of the first fifteen kings starting with Rehoboam and ending with Amon. The rule of the last five kings was really hectic and in their rule we can see finally the catastrophic destruction of the Temple. It was really unimaginable and beyond comprehension to the Jewish people. They thought how God Almighty allowed the total destruction of His House by the heathen rulers.

SIXTEENTH KING - JOSIAH: He was suddenly pushed forward as the sixteenth king of Judah. He was just 8 years old at that time. The main reason was that his father Amon was brutally assassinated by his enemies. Josiah was a righteous man. He sincerely loved God, which was unmatched and incomparable to any other Jewish king in history.

Josiah ruled for 31 years and brought religious reforms to Judah. At the age of 16 he sought for the God of David. At 20 he began a lifelong campaign to clean Judah and the capital Jerusalem from all idolatry. He destroyed the altars and also the wooden female deity into splinters. He stamped out the cruel sacrifices of innocent children in the Him-non valley. Josiah continued his extensive reform across Judah's boarder as far as North Naphtali (tribal area of the former Northern kingdom of Israel). He destroyed the pagan shrines in every city and executed the idolatrous priests. The Lord also foretold the coming of righteous Josiah by name 200 years earlier and he proved his righteousness in all the acts he did in his reign. He completely destroyed two golden calves and the Temple of Jeroboam at Bethel and Dan. He left no symptoms of golden calf for any identification by future generations.

Then at the age of 26 Josiah commissioned a complete restoration of Jerusalem Temple and initially the idol pollution was removed. After renovation the king purged the levitical priesthood. The pagan altars in the Temple courts were demolished. The ceremonial vessels of the Temple that were used for Baal

worship and the wooden Acherah idol which defiled the Holy of Holies were burnt in the Kidron valley. Then the ashes were taken to the unclean place of Bethel. The chariot and the horses of Mesopotonia's sun god were burnt. They were actually installed at the entrance of the Temple by his wicked grandfather Manasseh. While the repairs were in progress to the Temple the high priest Hilkiah discovered the Temple's scroll of Deuteronomy which was almost forgotten by Jews. God declared it as the original text written by prophet Moses. It was kept beside the Ark of Covenant as a testimony. Some faithful priests seemed to have hidden it 70 years ago and so it could not be destroyed by the king Manasseh during his reign. When the scribe Shaphan was reading the law from that scroll loudly Josiah tore his clothes in repentance and his heart was broken with grief. He realized in his mind how far he and his people neglected the law of God.

The king's soul was in utter panic. He questioned himself whether a divine curse of Deuteronomy would fall upon his nation or whether the kingdom of Judah be destroyed like the northern kingdom of Israel. He was sitting at the outside Southern gate of the Temple at that time. He called for the prophetess Huldah at once and consulted with her about this scroll. After thorough examination she said it was the original scroll written by prophet Moses. And she added that God's judgment would come upon Judah for their idol worship and Jerusalem be destroyed. Since Josiah was humbled before God such a calamity did not come during his reign. Surprisingly, he reintroduced the Passover feast and the feast of unleavened bread.

King Josiah read the scroll addressing the nation and people that gathered at the Temple court. As a result, the king and the people covenanted to obey God. He reappointed all the priests and Levites for their duties in the Temple. The Passover feast was celebrated with all pomp and glory that no other Judah king had done in such a grand scale. Since the time of prophet Samuel, The House of the Lord was cleansed and the ark of covenant kept in the Holy of Holies. This Ark of the Covenant was removed from its original place 70 years ago and in that place king Manasseh kept the idol of Acherah, a female deity. But according to Jewish traditions the Levites had secretly hidden the Ark at the underground chamber of the Holy of Holies to protect it from the prophetic destruction of the House of the Lord in future.

The Hebrew prophets like Nohaman and Zephaniah prophesied at that time in Judah. There was no history of Nohaman but Zephaniah was a prince from Davidic dynasty. He prophesied that the anger of the Lord would sweep

through the forest of Assyrian empire and bring a fairy destruction because they were the dead enemies to God's people. The prophecy was fulfilled after the death of Assyrian king. The Medes from the North and Babylonians from the South crushed the Assyrians again Assyria and Egypt joined together and declared war against Judah and Babylon. In the war, Judah faced a defeat and Josiah was mortally wounded by the Egyptian arrow. He died at the age of 39 and Judah went into the hands of Egyptians.

Among all the Davidic family rulers Josiah was the only God fearing and humble person throughout his reign. So his sudden death brought him highest state honors with a burial in the Davidic royal tombs. He was greatly mourned by prophet Jeremiah and the whole nation because of his sincere love towards God. He was the last king to be buried in the royal tombs as a special case for his role in restoring Davidic rule in Jerusalem. The sad demise of Josiah was a spiritual vacuum to the nation. After his death Judah experienced a free fall to the Babylonians captivity as if the news had gone to the notice of God for judgment and in 23 years the kingdom of Judah and its glorious Temple were completely destroyed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar.

SEVENTEENTH KING - JEHOIAHAZ: He was the fourth son of Josiah. He possessed a required confidence and military leadership which were badly needed in his time for the nation as it was in the midst of conflicts with Egypt. Anyway he occupied a throne of Judah without the acceptance of Egypt. In such a critical situation Egypt had developed unnecessary prejudice and occupied Jerusalem immediately and imposed harsh punishment upon Israelites. Pharaoh Necho condemned the land to a crushing annual tribute of one talent of gold (roughly 1100 troy ounces) and 100 talents of silver (which is more than three tons). Apart from that the king introduced a new system of religious course for the nation. This new set of spiritual course was declared in the divine record that he followed evil and abandoned the true religious reforms of his father Josiah. He reigned only for three months and then he was removed from the kingship. After this he was taken to the Egyptian military command center which was in North Damascus to sentence him. He was taken in chains to Egypt. He returned no more to his homeland after this incident and the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled. This danger could have been averted if God had sent prophet Jeremiah earlier to preach outside the royal palace. The prophet called the nation to return to the Lord but the message was refused by the people. Then Jeremiah boldly said, "for this saith the Lord touching Shallum the son of

Josiah – he shall die in the place whether they have led him captivity and shall see this land no more.

True sincerity was not routed out in human confidence and leadership skills. The psalmist knew well about this when he prayed “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills” (Psalms 121:1). It means he prayed to God by turning his face toward the Temple mountain of Jerusalem. He confessed “My help commeth from the Lord which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer my foot to be moved he that keepeth thee will not slumber” (Psalm 121:2-3). Deliverance comes from the ever vigilant Lord maker of heaven and earth.

EIGHTEENTH KING - JEHOIAKIM: Pharoah Necho installed “Eliakim” the second son of Josiah as the eighteenth king of Judah by changing his name into Jehoiakim. He ruled for 11 years in Jerusalem and became relentless in pursuit of the evil. Much was heard about Jehoiakim’s evil from the prophesy of Jeremiah one of the greatest Hebrew prophets in the Bible. He came from a wealthy family of priests in Anotath which is in north of Jerusalem. He was called into prophetic office when he was still in his mothers womb. Jeremiah received his first prophesy when Josiah was in his 13th year of rule. His 40 years ministry continued in the reign of final five kings till the time of Babylonian exile. He stood at the gate and called people for repentance “Trust ye not in lying words” saying “the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these.” (Jeremiah 7:4). The people blindly believed that they were safe because the Temple was in their midst but the Lord reminded Israel by saying he would not destroy Jerusalem and the Temple for their unrepenting as he destroyed the site of tabernacle in “Shiloh” centuries ago for their wickedness.

As recorded, it was in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the Lord directed Jeremiah to prophesize outside the Temple gate. God time and again urged Israel to repent if not he would destroy Jerusalem and finally ordered Jeremiah to wear cattle yoke on his shoulders as a prophetic sign of the coming of catastrophic Babylonian captivity. Those who heard this message were shocked. They arrested Jeremiah for treason and brought him to the court immediately. All the people that gathered there shouted in one voice demanding imprisonment and it was done by the authorities.

But Ahaikam a government servant under Josiah protected Jeremiah. The elders of the church finally said that Jeremiah would not deserve any capital punishment like death for his prophesy in the name of the Lord. Urizah also prophesized the same warning but he was forced to flee to Egypt and some Judean

officers pursued the prophet and he was brought back to Jerusalem. The king Jehoiakim murdered Uriah the prophet and left the body unburied to become rot among the groves of the poor outside the city walls.

In 605 B.C. the fourth year of Jehoiakim's rule the domination of Egypt over Judah suddenly changed and Nebuchadnezzar became the king of Babylon. Then he marched his army to the city of Carchemish (the old Hittite capital) on the Euphrates river. The Babylonians crushed the joint forces of Egypt and Assyria. The result was Babylon occupied a major part of Egypt and even Judah. Then in 606 B.C. the king of Babylon besieged Jerusalem and carried part of gold and silver of the Temple and kept them in his god's Temple. We studied previously that during the reign of Hezekiah God blessed him with more riches and the king became proud of it. He showed his wealth to the envoys who came from Babylon to wish him on his recovery from illness. On that occasion prophet Isaiah scolded him for his foolish act and told him that one day the king of Babylon would come and take away all he preserved from his forefathers and now it was the result of that prophecy. The king went not only with precious things but also with some captives as the first installment. Among the first captives Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were also there. Daniel prophesied in the later years in Babylon that the second Temple would also be destroyed by the Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes and it was in 168 B.C. He also said at the end of the age an enemy of Israel (sometimes called antichrist) will arise and desecrate the Lord's Temple. He will setup an idolatrous image and stop the sacrifices. In 605 B.C. God commanded Jeremiah to write all the prophecies he received from the beginning of his ministry. He dictated them to his secretary Baruch and he had inscribed them in a scroll. In the fifth year of Jehoiakim's rule Jeremiah sent Baruch to the Temple to read his prophecies to his people. Jeremiah was also a priest apart from prophet. But he did not give messages in the Temple. Baruch read the prophecies and warned Israelites not to trust Egyptians for deliverance from Babylon and added the king would destroy Jerusalem and kill the people. The king became very serious for the remarks and commanded the prophecies to be read again in his presence. Then he burned the prophecies piece by piece and warm himself in his winter palace. The king after this ordered for the arrest of both Jeremiah and Baruch, but they hid themselves from them.

Jeremiah was also called a weeping prophet. Though the prophecies were burned the Word of God was not stopped by the burning of the scroll. As a matter of fact, this action increased the severity of God judgment. Jeremiah

then made another scroll and gave it for reading. The king remained defiant against divine denouncement of his sin. He reacted much and looked for the prophet perhaps to kill him. Since the king valued only the respect of men he received no honor or mourning after death. As he did not allow the burial of Urijah prophet the dead body of Jehoiakim was also not buried but dragged to outside the city to rot like a bloated donkey. Another sin he committed was he shed much blood of innocent people to safeguard himself. Then in 601 B.C. the Babylonian king came and demanded Judah to pay heavy annual tribute to maintain peace with his kingdom. He accepted to pay as he was threatened. In 693 B.C. he rebelled against Babylon and supported Egypt. The result was the king of Babylon attacked Jerusalem also. In such conditions Jehoiakim simply kept open the doors of Jerusalem city for the entry of the army. They killed many noted leaders and the king carried the vessels of the Temple to Babylon. The major items taken from the Temple were Menorah, shew bread table and incense altar. The king was put in shackles for exile to Babylon. But Nebuchadnezzar changed his mind and executed him immediately. Jehoiakim faced a cruel death at the age of 36. He reigned for 11 years and the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled. His corpse was thrown outside Jerusalem gate as a warning from Babylon. He was not mourned nor given honorable burial in the royal tombs of his forefathers. Then the reign of Jehoiakim was the most disastrous one to Judah. He left the Jewish nation and the people in spiritual and political chaos.

NINETEENTH KING - JEHOIACHIN: Jehoiakim died in 598 and his son Jehoiachin was crowned as nineteenth king of Judah. He had some other names like Jeconiah or Coniah. He was the grandson of Godly king Josiah but he did all which was evil in the sight of God. Prophet Jeremiah delivered a fairy condemnation against Jehoiachin. The Lord said even though Jehoiachin was the king of Judah he was like a priceless signet ring on his right hand. He simply removed it and put it to the hands of the king of Babylon because Jehoiachin committed to the godless policies like his father. So God cursed him that none of Jehoiachin's heirs should sit on the throne of David "write ye this man childless a man that shall not prosper in his days for no man of his seed shall prosper sitting upon the throne of David and ruling anymore in Judah." (Jeremiah 22:30). The impact of this curse should be ignored because the Messiah had to be raised from Davidic dynasty to rule Millennial Messianic kingdom in future. The (virgin) birth of Messiah brings an amazing harmony between Jeconias curse and the Messianic prophecies. The physical son of Mary was Jesus and He

was also a physical son of David through non cursed line of David's son "Nathan" As the legal son of Joseph (a descendant of Jehoiachin) Jesus was also legally qualified to the Davidic throne without falling under the curse of Jehoiachin. The Hebrew scripture also made Jesus qualified to sit on the throne of David and rule over Israel forever from Jerusalem.

The king of Babylon felt sorry for making Jehoiachin king of Judah because he might take vengeance for killing his father Jehoiakim brutally. It was the time Nebuchadnezzar prepared to seize Jerusalem for the second time in 593 B.C. by that time Jehoiachin's family was already surrendered to Babylon. So the king deposed him from Judah's throne only after three months and 10 days. The Babylonians carried him along with 10,000 leaders of Judah. Jehoiachin spent the rest of 47 years in Babylon's hardest prison but shortly before his death the king's son became considerate towards Jehoiachin and released him from the prison and kept him in the house arrest.

The king Nebuchadnezzar seized all the funds of the Temple treasury and royal palace. Everything was done only in the fulfillment of the Word of God that was spoken by prophet Isaiah more than 100 years ago to the king Hezekiah. "Behold the days come that have laid up in store unto this day can be carried into Babylon nothing shall be left saith the Lord." (2 kings 20:17). The king took the golden bowels and measuring items also which king Solomon made for the Temple. Jeremiah prophesized that it was not an end. The Temple would be plundered even further in future. Prophet Elkaiah was one of the exiled priests in the second deportation in 593 B.C. He was a descendant of Zadok the first high priest of Solomon's Temple. He prophesized in Babylon exile. He got a vision about the idolatrous pollution of the Temple and the deportation of the Shechinah glory in preparation for Babylonian destruction.

Just at that time the wife of Ezekiah died on the day the final seize of Jehoiakim began. It was really a pathetic sign that the Lord could also destroy His own house to the excellence of the nation. In the meantime, Ezekiah got another vision regarding the future of Shechinah glory to the Messianic Temple. God said about the Messianic Temple as the place of my throne and the place of the source of my feet where I dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. As recorded the Shechinah glory would not depart again nor the house of the Lord be destroyed forever. God will dwell in the midst of Israel according to his promise.

TWENTIETH KING - ZEDEKIAH: Now the king of Babylon had full control over Judah. In 597 B.C Nebuchadnezzar changed the name of the second son of Josiah into Zedekiah and installed him as the twentieth king of Judah. Then he forced Zedekiah to swear a solemn oath in the name of the God of Israel with full and unwavering allegiance to Babylon. Zedekiah ruled for 11 years and followed the way of the life of his two brothers Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim including evil doings. The Temple was not taken care of in his reign because it had to be controlled by sinful men. In this context, Jesus might echo the prophetic words of the prophet Jeremiah “In this house which is called by my name become a den of robbers in your eye?” (Jeremiah 7:11). Jeremiah returned to preaching in the Temple courts by keeping the wooden yoke on his shoulders.

Jeremiah warned Zedekiah by saying “bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people and live.” When Zedekiah was in the fourth year of his reign in 594 B.C. one unhappy incident took place in the outer court of the Temple. It was between Jeremiah and a false prophet Hananiah the controversy was Hananiah opposed the prophecies of Jeremiah and encouraged the nation to rebel against Babylon. Then Hananiah seized the yoke from Jeremiah and broke it into pieces. He gave a wrong prophecy that nothing would happen to the house of the God of Israel. “Thus speaketh the Lord of the house of the king of Babylon which is in true will. I bring again into this place and the vessels of the Lord’s house that Nebuchadnezzar looted and carried away to Babylon”.

The Lord gave his judgment upon the false prophet Hananiah who had broken the wooden yoke from the neck of Jeremiah. The lies of Hananiah had created an iron yoke upon the people for the confirmation of Jeremiah’s prophecies. The judgment of God upon Hananiah was that he would die within a year and he died accordingly in the fall of that year. Then regarding Zedekiah he pretended to be obedient toward Babylon but he wanted freedom to his nation. He appeared to be serving the Lord before Jeremiah but rejected Gods warning in the presence of his princes thereby he remained faraway from God and continued his evil doings. He was never humbled before God. Even the people by their evil doings polluted the house of the Lord.

During 586 B.C. the faithless Zedekiah broke his solemn oath to God and rebelled against Babylon. The result was that the full force of divine judgment was no longer delayed. The king deployed a huge force under the command of six generals to crush Jerusalem. Though Zedekiah made some alliance with

Egypt the Babylonian army ,could enter Jerusalem. They destroyed the city, looted the Holy Temple and went with more captives. This was the third and final attack by Babylon. Now persecution of God's people like Jeremiah was restored. He was charged with treason and arrested. The officials beat him black and blue and threw him in Jerusalem's much feared prison. Later Zedekiah's officials threw him into a muddy cistern. He was almost perished due to extreme exposition and starvation while Jeremiah was recovering from his illness Zedekiah sent his officials to request his God regarding the position of Judah but Jeremiah asked Zedekiah to surrender Jerusalem. Thus saith the Lord "Behold I said before few the way of life and the way of death. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword and by the famine and by pestilence but he that goeth out and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you he shall live." (Jeremiah 21:8-9). Zedekiah and his princes bluntly refused the divine reply. As predicted famine entered the city. There was limited water supply. The inmates started eating dung diseased meat of dead animals and weeds. There was no sanitation. Disease and parasite infections were rampant. There were bitter fighting's and continuous quarrelings among themselves. When Zedekiah saw the capital city was lost he fled into the Judean wilderness with his officials in darkness. But he was captured 20 miles away from Jericho and brought to Nebuchadnezzar face to face because he was an oath breaker who deserved some punishment. His final sight was the ghory execution of his sons. Then his eyes were removed and taken in double bronze cutters to the Babylon. The other officials were also executed. The exiled Jews were kept in a faraway place and from there they cried unto God to Jerusalem and to the Temple. They cried "By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down ye we wept when we remembered the Zion – it is said individually "If I forget thee O Jerusalem let my right hand forget her cunning" (Psalms 137:1-5).

Nebuchadnezzar completed the execution of all leaders. Then he sent again the captains of his bodyguards to Jerusalem in 586 B.C. for the total destruction. As the king planned the city walls were toppled and mansions set ablaze. The House of the Lord stripped off all its treasures. They burnt the Holy Temple also and it was reduced to a blackened pile of rubbles. As a result, there was no more sacrifices and according to history such barbarous act never took place in 374 years of history of the first Temple nor in 900 years from the time of the construction of wilderness tabernacle at Mount Sinai in about 1446 B.C. Even the trees were razed on the mountain of the Lord and the wild animals moved freely in the site of the Temple. Whatever might be the historical background for the total destruction of the Lord's Temple it is pathetic and

critical to examine. As we know, God was not powerless to stop that in human act for God did not allow the enemies intentionally to ruin His house. He always loved His house and has His future plan and promised to keep His house permanently on the mount Zion.

The Holy Temple was not a talisman. It became more precious because the Shechinah glory and the Ark of covenant were kept inside. Israelites had the privilege of keeping the Temple in the midst of their nation but it could not protect them from outside dangers. It did not give permission for people to commit sin nor it could stop God's judgment for their sin. The scripture is quite clear and gave the reason for destruction of the first Temple. "The Israelites departed from the Lord and their spiritual abandonment was quite evident through scripture. And they left the house of the Lord God of their forefathers and served groves and idols and God's wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this trespass." (2 Chronicles 24:18). They forgot their God and polluted His house. Though king Solomon built the house magnificently the apostasy (falling away from God) had begun by the same king Solomon because of his too many heathen wives. And this apostasy reached its pinnacle during the reign of Manas'seh. So God realized and decided to take revenge. He said "because thou hast defiled my sanctuary – I will cause my fury to rest upon them." That is the reason why God justified their destruction. He was right and perfect in what He did. He hates sin and also gave suitable judgment. The judgment is always balanced with the spiritual offence. But the judgment of God was not one sided. The righteous God on one hand and the people of Babylon for their evil act on the Mount Zion were reasonable for this outcome. God soon bring upon Babylon the vengeance of His Temple for disregarding His house. He delayed His judgment because He wanted to give them enough time for repentance. God's judgment would come with proper announcement and if once it comes it is inescapable. It would come only after repeated warnings "and the Lord God of their forefathers sent to them by his messengers – because he had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. The Lord already revealed through the scriptures the coming destruction of the Temple 474 years before God even warned king Solomon and Israelites at the time of its dedication by saying "But if ye turned away and forsake my statuettes – this house which I had sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight." (2 chronicles 7:19-20). Prophet Amos foresaw the Lord stroke Temple in judgment. (Amos 9:1).

Prophet Jeremiah prophesized that the Temple would be like Shiloh (Jeremiah 7:14) which is a reminder that in their sinful past God had allowed

the Philistines to destroy the tabernacle site at Shiloh. The Lord proclaimed through Ezekiel “Behold I will propane my sanctuary.” (Ezekiel 24:21). There are many more quotations in support of God’s judgment. These quotations clearly show that God had sent warnings again and again through His prophets. We can also see how God is merciful at the time of deliverance of His people. (for this saith the Lord that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you and perform by good word toward you in causing you to return to this place.” (Jeremiah 29:10). God would graciously deliver His people from Babylon and return to them to rebuild His house in Jerusalem. So far we have seen the destruction of the Temple and God’s faithfulness to His promises. For this saith the Lord, like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people so well and bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.” The glorious future promises of God were as absolute and certain as His fulfilled judgment in the past. The Messiah will rule forever by sitting on David’s throne. The increase of His government and the peace shall be no end of the throne of David and upon His kingdom in order to establish His judgment with justice from henceforth even forever.

The Messianic Temple will be built on Mount Zion as the place of His throne and the place of the sores of His feet which He dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. For seventy years Mount Zion would be barren without the house of the Lord. But the absence of God’s Temple would be just temporary. God would bring back all the captives and the Temple be rebuilt.

20 KINGS OF DAVIDIC DYNASTY:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Rehoboam. | 11. Jotham. |
| 2. Abijam or Abija or Abia | 12. Ahaz. |
| 3. ASa | 13. Hezekiah. |
| 4. Jehosopat. | 14. Manas’sseh. |
| 5. Jehoram. | 15. Amon. |
| 6. Ahaziah. | 16. Josiah. |
| 7. Athaliah. | 17. Jehoiahuz. |
| 8. Joash. | 18. Jehoiakim |
| 9. Amazeah. | 19. Jehoiachin or |
| 10. Uzziah. | Jeconiah or Coniah. |
| | 20. Zedeckiah. |

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

In the book of Daniel the second chapter is no doubt the most wonderful and thought provoking one in the entire Bible. Through this chapter Daniel gave to the readers a flawless skeleton of history starting from six hundred years before the coming of Jesus Christ and continued till His second coming and the start of His millennial Kingdom. As a matter of fact, Daniel's understanding of all these events came to him from his all powerful God, whom he served with faith as a great prophet. So, we must trust him and believe in what all he said in this story.

This prophetic view is not the view of all nations, or wars, or people and events of history but it is an impression of Israel and Christ who would come from her (Israel) on one side and the nations that rule over Israel and the Antichrist who comes from them on the other. That is to say, the conflict between Israel and all other nations is all about. We can also say, it is the conflict between God and Satan, Christ and Antichrist, people who belong to God, the creator and the remaining people. Who support Satan the usurper of that creation. This conflict has been going on in human history, found its origin in the Garden of Eden and continued since the call of Abraham to the present day. To be much clearer this story tells about the perpetual enmity between God's people and the remaining people, who always support Satan.

Daniel mentioned his prophetic foretelling of history with the following words. And in the second year of the rule, Nebuchadnezzar got a dream, a terrible dream by which his spirits were troubled and his sleep had been broken from him (Daniel 2:1). The readers can find out four significant words in this opening verse. They are Nebuchadnezzar's dream, troubled and broke. Actually at that time of Daniel's writing about this incident, Nebuchadnezzar was called the greatest and the most powerful king in the world. Twenty five years before he became the king his father Nabopolassar defeated mighty Assyrian King. Then in less than ten years earlier he himself defeated another powerful Egyptian King. Again in less than three years period the king of Israel was miserably defeated by him.

So, Nebuchadnezzar ruled his empire with absolute power, when such a great king dreamed one should not take it lightly such an unnatural dream. Only foolish people would ignore the importance of such dreams. Generally that kind of dreams would come to great personalities like Nebuchadnezzar, because God had something to reveal to the king through prophet Daniel. So, due to

that dream the king's mind became out of control, as he spent sleepless night. In such conditions the king immediately summoned all wise men to come before him. The four great nations of ancient history that involved in the king's dream, were Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. All those four nations during their rule of Israel, tried their best for its destruction.

We can understand from the Bible that the subject was not directly addressed. His mental disturbance was so conspicuous that he immediately got up from his bed, and summoned his guards and in about ten seconds and in loud voice the king commanded "get me my wise men." But the main idea was "get them all." The king did not care or feel that he was disturbing people in the dark midnight the probable reason in this regard must be when the king was troubled without sleep how can the common people sleep? Even the guards rushed to different places at full speed to implement the king's command.

Then with in minutes the wise men who felt unhappy regarding the disturbance of the king appeared in fear and much puzzled before their brilliant ruthless and unpredictable monarch. All the wise men did not want to wait for a long time to answer this unaudible question. The king dreamed a dream, it was an important dream which troubled the king a lot. But the most pathetic situation was that the king forgot the dream. The Bible readers can meditate for a while whether the king had really forgotten the dream or whether he wished to test the knowledge of his wise men. But to my mind it appears that he really forgot the dream and thought his wise men would tell him the brief story of his dream.

Now the conversation between the king and the wise men followed regarding the dream which was very interesting. The wise men requested the king "Tell thy servants the dream, and we will shrew the interpretation (Daniel 2:4)." For that the king's answer was "If you will not make known unto me the dream, with correct interpretation thereof ye shall be cut in pieces and your houses shall be made a dung hill (Daniel 2:5). The king became more serious and the wise men continued their request. Let the king tell his servants the dream and we will give correct interpretation of it. The king without explaining his dream, became angry and adamant. The wise men simply would have said that they had no answer for his dream. The way of answer would have made the king more angry but preserved their lives.

The wise men finally came to a conclusion that there was no man on earth could give the meaning of his dream except some god. whose dwelling

place must be not with flesh and blood like human beings. So, all the wise men proved themselves unwise to interpret the dream of the most powerful king on earth. The conduct of all these unworthy men made Nebuchadnezzar angry and more furious. Then the king gave a proclamation that all wise men of Babylon must be destroyed. It was a written decree to make an end of all wise men. In such situation, Daniel and his three friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were also included in the list of wise men to be sent to death.

Yet, Daniel and his three friends did not come to the presence of the king at the initial encounter between the king and his people. And the contexts of the decree were not at all destroyed the mind of Daniel instead he sought the audience with the king in such critical situation. He requested the king to give him some time for the correct interpretation of his dream.

This was not at all the case of “put up or shut up.” But it was the case of “put up otherwise you are dead.” At the same time this was not an assurance from Daniel because he was also included in the punishment of death. When Daniel heard the decree he wished for the audience with the king, as the case involved more faith on the part of Daniel. As a matter of fact God granted him the gift of understanding visions and dreams. And the time had come for him to exercise his gift in the case of the king's dream there is one complicated and unanswerable question in this connection. What must have been the reason for Nebuchadnezzar to grant time to Daniel to answer his dream, whereas he bluntly refused the same to the wise men?

The main reason appears to be that Daniel must have passed the examination of the royal service after three years training; or he must have shown due respect to the king while talking with him or since Daniel was one of the captives of Judah or the king himself must have had one thing in his mind that is all his magicians, astrologers, sorcerers and Chaldea's believed in many god's in Babylon whereas Daniel believed only in one God the God of Israel. So, the king might have thought that it would be possible for Daniel to answer his dream by praying to his only God.

According to history it was the Chaldea's who laid the foundation for the science of Astronomy by studying the stars, making maps of the positions of the planets and also of the moon. They introduced Astrology to with the combination of astronomical observations with the principles of pagan religion. The first thing Daniel did after he left the king was to find out his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and conduct prayer meeting. They all realized

the truth that only through effective and fervent prayer one can achieve anything from God. So these four young “righteous” Jewish men prayed to their God for mercy and insight into the king’s dream, so that they would not be killed with other wise men of Babylon.

They prayed not for their own sake, but for the sake of the king and his dream. So, the answer for their prayer came in a very short time. The secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision during night time. It was a brief history from the day of Daniel, until the second coming of Christ at the beginning of His Millennial kingdom. Only a few might understand the spiritual growth of Daniel. After this wonderful vision Daniel said these words:

“And he changeth the times and seasons, he removeth kings and sitteth up kings, he giveth wisdom and knowledge unto the wise. He revealeth the deep and secret things he knoweth what is in darkness and the light dwelleth with him. I thank thee and praise thee thou O God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee for thou hast now made known unto us the king’s matter” (Daniel 2:21-23). Everything in the universe belonged to God as creator as sustainer and as consummator. All things in this world have their origin, movement and consummation in God only.

Daniel became successful in knowing the meaning of the dream of the king. So, he said “There is God in heaven that revealeth secrets” (Daniel 2:24-30). Then he remembered that the wise men of Babylon were in danger. He immediately found “Ariocho” who was in-charge of the execution of all wise men and had a brief talk with him in three points.

- 1) He requested him not to destroy the wise men of Babylon.
- 2) He asked that man to take him to the king.
- 3) He would interpret the dream of the king correctly.

Though the wise men were not friendly to Daniel, he helped and saved them from the punishment of death. Actually they were ungrateful people. They planned some ways and means to kill Daniel. At last Ariocho took Daniel to the king and introduced him by saying that he found a man among the captives who could interpret the king’s dream. Still the king had a doubt whether Daniel knew the dream or whether he could interpret the dream correctly.

Daniel's answer to the king was fascinating and planned amazingly suitable and intended to tantalizing. It was fully designed to answer the question of the king. And now the time had come to Daniel to exalt his God before the king. He even degraded himself and said that he received all the credit from Almighty God only for the interpretation of his dream. There was a dramatic change in the court of Babylon. Where the discussion regarding the dream of the king was going on with the presence of the young prophet of God Daniel, the hot discussion was turned into a sermon. A most powerful sermon that captivated and stunned the king. The moment Daniel finished his message probably with the presence of the Holy Spirit the most powerful and unrivalled monarch of Babylon fell before Daniel's God.

As a result Daniel was no longer to be punished by the king, and instead of that he was appointed to the post of "secretary of state" to the Babylonian empire. It was only due to the power of the Word of God which was like sword. Now Daniel started answering the questions of the king with his own question. He answered the king's dream in such a way that no one from the wise men could have done. He started his sermon and continued with five words. "But there is God" Daniel's God is a God in heaven. He is the revealer of secrets and so He could tell Nebuchadnezzar what must happen throughout history up to the very end of the age.

Daniel then addressed the king only with three words. He said, "As for your" the God of heaven who reveals secrets has revealed to you in your dream what shall come to pass" (Daniel 2:29). Daniel's God is really a transcending God who can be personally known and who is not at all busy to interact with those who would like to seek His presence. Daniel somehow created very good impression about his God to the king who glorified Him. He did not stop from sharing four more words. He said, "But as for me" the answer for your question was not revealed to me, because I possess any natural wisdom and required knowledge. In sovereignty Nebuchadnezzar God proposed you to be recipient of death. And God chose me to be its interpreter.

With the three brilliant and simple observations "But there is a God." "As for your," "But as for me" now the stage was prepared to reveal the dream in detail, point wise what the king exactly dreamed.

The king must have seen much of that in his court in the form of discussion, but not what Daniel said. So, when he was revealing the dream the king must

have seated down on his throne and if he had already seated, he must have fallen down from his throne. Nebuchadnezzar was hearing the most important matter from the mouth of Daniel, who was a captive and in just twenties it was really astonishing.

The king actually demanded two points from his wise men,

- 1) He demanded from them to explain the dream.
- 2) He demanded from them the correct interpretation of the dream. And now Prophet Daniel revealed the dream in the verses 31-35 of the second chapter. In these verses, he did not give even a word of interpretation, but simply revealed the dream.

Daniel explained the dream in full details. He said the king beheld in his dream a colossal image (statue). The image was no doubt dazzling terrifying and awesome. The head of the image was gold, its breasts and arms were made of silver, its belly and thighs were made of brass, its legs were of iron and its feet were of iron and part of clay. Then a new theme was introduced all of a sudden into the dream. Daniel said, he had seen a stone was cut out without hands which smote the image upon its feet that were of iron and clay and broke them into innumerable pieces and severe wind spread them in to all places. At the same time some miraculous thing happened. The stone that hit the image became a huge mountain all of a sudden and covered the earth. This is the story in nutshell Daniel told the king about his dream.

Next, he interpreted the influence of these parts of the image that was already destroyed. As pride goes before one's fall the pride of the king soared higher and higher till it reached its pinnacle, while Daniel was interpreting the story of the dream first he addressed the king by saying "Thou O king art a king of Kings" (Daniel 2:37). The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power and strength and glory. And wherever the children of men, dwell the birds of the fields and the fowls of heaven hath he given into thine hand and hath made thee rule over them all. Thou (you king Nebuchadnezzar and your Babylonian empire) art this head of god (Daniel 2:37-38).

But here as readers, we should not be disturbed at the unimaginable progress of the king even though he was sinful and wicked, he was exalted to the status of the king of kings by Almighty God Daniel after finishing the interpretation of the dream said, blessed be the name of God forever and ever for wisdom and might are His. And He changeth the times and the seasons, He

removeth kings and sitteth up kings. In this context, prophet Isaiah also gave us some information to understand this matter as God's spokesman. He said for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways saith the Lord. For as heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9).

According to the description of Daniel the kingdom of Babylon represented the head of fine gold in the image and it was followed by the second kingdom. The breast and arms made of silver were the representation of the second kingdom Daniel told the king that the second kingdom would be an inferior one to his kingdom. The king immediately reacted and asked him to speak about next kingdom that reprinted in the image as its belly and thighs of brass.

Daniel said about the third kingdom that represented the belly and thighs of the image that would rule all the earth. The fourth kingdom was represented in the legs and feet of the image made of iron and clay and it has more details than the other three kingdoms Daniel said the fourth kingdom had to be as strong as iron that could brake anything and everything. As feet and toes were part of iron and part of clay the kingdom shall be divided. Because the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay the kingdom would be partly strong and partly broken. That is to say, some part would be stronger and some part weaker. Daniel completed the description of the impressive image from head to feet and nature of each of the four kingdoms which made up the image.

We can clarify further as the sovereignty of the first kingdom. The diminished strength of the second kingdom. The universal conquest of the third kingdom and the vicious and ruthless power of the fourth kingdom. Daniel had not yet completed the description of the kingdoms. So in the days these kingdoms, god had set up which was referred to as a high mountain that could fill the whole earth. And this kingdom would not be destroyed under any circumstances. Daniel also said that this kingdom would not be taken away by other people, but it would brake into pieces.

Daniel finished his interpretation of the king's dream and then said how God of heaven would establish His kingdom with the following words. The stone was cut off from the mountain with out hands and broke the image into pieces, the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold. As a result the great God of heaven was made known to the king what would happen hereafter at the end of the age. If the dream was genuine and the interpretation was correct.

The dream of the king and its interpretation by Daniel centred on three important points.

- 1) Four prominent kingdoms were going to be emerged.
- 2) Those four kingdoms would be present at the end of the age. The image that represented the four kingdoms would be smitten on the feet and the entire image broken into insignificant pieces.
- 3) The stone that smote the image would become a huge mountain and fill the whole earth. Prophet Daniel interpreted this huge mountain as a kingdom set up by the God of heaven which would never be destroyed.

After going through the whole story of the king Nebuchadnezzar we may get some doubts; like the identification of the four kingdoms except the first one was not given. The reason for the selection of those four kingdoms instead of other kingdoms was not given. There is no proper explanation, how those four kingdoms would be presented at the end of the age. The identity of the stone that smote the image upon its feet was also not given.

With careful study of the Bible, we can come to a conclusion that the second chapter of the book of Daniel can be called one of the most fascinating prophetic chapters and also most important one. He gave us the skeleton of history beginning six hundred years before the time of Christ and continued till His second coming and the start of His millennial kingdom. We can find some more sources in the Bible that help to add flesh and blood to the skeleton of Daniel's second chapter. The first source can be the remaining book of Daniel. He got dreams and visions frequently in his life and many of them shed future light on this second chapter. The secular history between 600 BC and 100 AD caused a great help to the teachers for the interpretation of the second chapter. The third source is the prophetic scriptures of the Old Testament and the New Testament primarily "The Book of Revelation" that added flesh to the interpretation of the king's dream.

We could have some information through the above said sources to expose and identify the nations connected to the image that followed Babylon as Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Those sources helped to expose and understand that the four kingdoms, during their rule of Israel, tried to destroy the nation and its people as mentioned in history. Babylon invaded Israel three times. The result of the attack was they took thousands of Jews as captives and

even blinded Zedekiah the last king of Davidic dynasty and finally destroyed the Temple of God on Mount Morea.

During the Medo-Persia rule, Haman the prime minister made a treacherous plan to wipe out all Jews from that vast kingdom of 127 provinces ruled by king Ahasuerus. He sent a decree to all provinces that all Jews must be slain on a particular day. But the timely intervention of the Queen Esther saved their lives. She convinced her husband the king by telling him the true story and finally Haman himself was hanged to death. As a result of that wonderful incident a new festival also came into existence to the Jews called "Purim."

The Hellenistic Greek ruler of Syria Antiochus Epiphanes killed tens of thousands of innocent Jews during 168 and 165 BC. He even declared that following the religious principles of Judaism was an offence and against Greek religion. Added to that he polluted God's Temple by keeping the statue of pagan deity 'Zeus' in the Holy of Holies. He also allowed pigs to be sacrificed to the heathen god in the Temple.

The Romans happened to rule Israel for about four centuries. They were the real political power mongers who saw the barbarous act of crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the cross. Then in 70 AD, they destroyed the Second Temple in Jerusalem which was built on the same foundation of the First Temple by Zerubbabel and others who returned from exile from Babylon. The Romans killed more Jews than any other rulers of Judah (Israel). They took Jews as prisoners to Rome, and many families were scattered into different parts of the earth. The most astonishing in their reign was that they built a temple for their god Jupiter on the same site of the God of Israel. This is the remarkable brief story of the four kingdoms that represented in the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Now in this context, what is theological importance and what was contemporary significance, let us try to examine. The Babylonians faced a miserable defeat in the hands of Medo-Persia army. Then the one million men army of Medo-Persia was utterly defeated by just fifty thousand Greek army of Alexander the great and the Roman power became world wide during the first century BC. When the Babylonians were devastated by the Persians were defeated by Greeks they also remained in existence. When the weakened Greek Kingdom was overshadowed by the emerging Roman kingdom, Greece did not cease to exist.

In 70 AD, Israel was defeated by the Romans. They ruined the Temple and took away all the valuables from it. In addition to that the Jews were scattered into many places of the earth, and only a few could remain in Jerusalem at that time. Still, Israel remained intact after 1900 years Israel became so powerful and maintained an efficient army in the Middle East. The nation also became popular for its most thriving economic policy in the world. So, Israel came back to its original position.

The Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar was changed into modern Iraq. In olden days this Babylon was famous for its hanging gardens and called them one of the seven wonders of the world. Fifty years ago this Iraq was treated as the third world country and most unheard nation. But today it became so important that there is no daily news paper without the news from Iraq. Even America built one largest embassy building in Iraq that in no other country we can find. The main purpose of that is, United States wants to control the entire Middle East by keeping an eye on Iraq only so, because of its importance, politically, we can say Babylon is back.

According to historical background Persia, one of the four kingdoms in the image of Daniel was called the modern Iran. Persia changed its name to Iran in 1935 for many centuries it remained as insignificant with barren landscape of Middle East. Today it has oil wells and became a very rich country. In addition to that the country used to black mail Israel on some pretext or other and trying to take more initiative in developing nuclear power with that ambitions plan Persia is also back.

The third kingdom Greece in the image of Daniel 2nd chapter became the present Syria. In 334 BC Alexander the great began his conquest of Persian empire with a small army and also some other countries around. Then he spread the Greek language, philosophy, culture, dress, and even gods. He could not continue his conquest due to his pre-mature death. As a result his kingdom was divided among four of his military generals and one of them got Syria. In course of time this part of Grecian empire came under Antiochus Apiphanes who was one of the notorious persecutors of Israel. Fifty years ago Syria was also just a third world country unimportant and unknown to many. This country even developed perpetual hatred toward Israel. Its partnership with Iran, ill-treatment of her own citizens and her involvement in the terrorism are quite-conspicuous, and every day, we can find Syria in the news papers with some unpleasant news. Still Greece (Syria) is back.

The fourth kingdom was Rome in the image of Daniel, became the present “Turkey” this Turkey was the eastern part of Roman empire with another name Byzantine empire and Constantine was the emperor from 325 A.D. At that time, he called his capital Constantinople, which at present became Turkey now for centuries, this Constantinople was a major centre for all political and religious activities especially after Constantine and his mother Helena became Christians. Both of them did a lot for the spreading of Christianity. As Daniel said both East and West of the Roman Empire were represented in the two legs of the image composed of iron and those feet made of iron and clay.

Today Turkey is considered to be the most powerful Muslim nation in the world and it is located on the physical border between the East and West of the Romans Empire. But in 2006, Turkey which had been a strong supporter of Israel became a dead enemy. So, Turkey is also in existence. For the present these four nations, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey (Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome) have become the greatest threat even for the existence of Israel.

Then who could be the stone that hit the feet of the image and finally destroyed the four kingdoms? Apostle Peter called Christ “a stumbling Stone” to the Jews (1 Peter 2:8). Apostle Paul called Christ the “cornerstone” for the church (Ephesians 2:20). According to the Bible, Jesus is called the king, a descendant of king David and lion of the tribe of Judah. After his second coming, he would rush to the battlefield to defend His people against the enemies. Our God is a covenant keeping God. Those who bless Israel will be blessed by God, and those who curse Israel will be cursed by God. The enemy nations with the influence of Satan and Antichrist might try to obstruct Israel and not allow Jesus to return to his throne in Jerusalem but those nations would see a great surprise and the time for that surprise is not too far.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S MASTER PLAN

The king of Babylon Nebuchadnezzar made necessary arrangements for the making of a golden image. Then he made a proclamation to all people of different nations and languages asking them to come and bow before the golden image. He also declared the punishment if they disobeyed his order. The decree was in the following manner “An Herald cried out that all people irrespective of their languages and nations must bow down before the golden image made by the king Nebuchadnezzar the moment they hear the music from the instruments. If anybody disobeyed his order would be thrown into the burning fairy furnace.”

But this declaration from the royal palace was openly disobeyed by three Hebrew men Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. If we look into the book of Daniel in the Bible it appears that the third chapter was started abruptly. The golden image made by the king was 60 cubits height and 6 cubits in breadth. The cubit was the standard measurement during the Old Testament times. It is roughly said that one cubit is equal to 18 inches. As per that calculation the golden image was of 90 feet height and of 9 feet in breadth. Such a mighty image was made of pure gold.

It was really very costly and we can understand the true character of the king through the Bible and secular history. He appeared to be very generous in promoting and elevating the image of his gods. It is quite possible to imagine that the image was in the likeness of the king himself. It was also suggested by some that the image was in the likeness of the god Merodach or Marduk made in his honour. This diety according to the legends was more popular among heathens as the god of battles. If we take it for granted the image was in the likeness of the king himself it must be the outcome of the dream of the great Colossus which was indicated by prophet Daniel as the king Nebuchadnezzar represented “The head of gold” of the image and was quite appropriate.

If the image was of Merodach, the god of battles, we can understand it was done to honour the god of king. Actually he was the most powerful king according to history. He dominated the world politically in his time. He ruled for about 40 years and as a military commander he never lost a battle. He remained as an authoritative and unrivaled king. He thought himself to be the son of Merodach, the son of the lord of battles. It is quite clear this golden image was erected and the king commanded and invited all the princes

governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counselors, sheriffs and the rulers of the provinces of great Babylonian kingdom to attend the dedication of the image.

For all this show we must presume there is some political background and we can understand this from the third chapter of the book of Daniel. The big day had come at last and all the invitees assembled in the plain of “Dura” outside the magnificent city of Babylon. The golden image could be seen even from a long distance in the plain. As a matter of fact there was nothing to distract the audience from the site of that dominant image not even the beautiful hanging gardens of Babylon which were called one of the seven wonders of the world, not even the magnificent temples built for other Babylonian gods like Nebo, Ishter and Belter whose statues were in the city itself and not even the kings own Colossal palace.

So all the faces of the assembled people were focused on the spectacular golden image only that is in the plain of Dura. The state authorities appointed a preacher also for the occasion, which was brief, clear, and to the point. This message is also recorded in the Bible in the following manner “To you it is commanded O people, nations and languages that at what time ye hear the sound of the music of all instruments ye fall down and worship the golden image that the king Nebuchadnezzar hath set up. And who so falleth not and worshipeth shall the same our be cast into the midst of a burning furnace.”

It was almost a warning from the king and nothing ununderstandable. Either they must bow down their heads before the image or be ready to be thrown into the burning fairy furnace. Generally, those kings who wanted to expand their kingdoms must know the unifying tactics. Something that can bring unity out of disunity. Simplicity out of complexity. Alexander the great also followed the same principle during his rapid conquests. He achieved this unification by spreading Greek language, Greek culture and worshipping of Greek gods at every place he conquered. The Roman emperors also achieved unification through the personification of Rome as a god. The kings of England achieved unification through one official state church. If we look into the history of man and nation many political leaders used religion as their weapon to achieve their positions politically.

Nebuchadnezzar also wanted to control the captured lands and people through religion only. He wanted all people and all nations irrespective of their religious background to worship only one diety and this master plan the king wanted to implement on that occasion. That was the main purpose of the

golden image to have political allegiances and control. We can understand all this show and conclude the king himself wanted to be worshipped as one of deities by men. He thought everybody would be pleased with his plan and treat him as god and thereby there is every possibility for people to forget about the heavenly father (our God).

Under these circumstances the three Hebrew men had to live in that strange land as captives in a strange culture and with strange problems. Their nation was defeated. Their people became helpless and hopeless. Their holy temple in Jerusalem was miserably destroyed and all the costly vessels from the temple were taken away by the king. Above all with that total destruction their living god was discredited so all this conditions might prompt them to surrender themselves to the decree of the king and bow down before the golden image.

Generally music is always associated with worship. The 150 songs which comprised Psalms in the Bible were Israel's Hymnal. Singing is the vocal expression of the worship of God that comes from the inner core of our heart. The requirement for singing is redemption. Singing is the sound of the soul that is set free. Without redemption one cannot sing really. It is a fact that only a child of God and believer can sing a song of worship. Most of the churches now a days have their own choir, musical groups and congregational singing as part of their worship.

False religion also has its own counterfeit music and Nebuchadnezzar would not be denied of it. He had full orchestra with all kinds of instruments. At his command all rulers of different cadres throughout his vast kingdom attended the function because he was considered the most powerful king of his time. So there was a gathering of thousands in the open place of Dura outside the city before the golden image. Now the time had come for worship with music and their emotions would be exposed. They would bow down to that heathen image and in doing so swear their unending religions and loyalty to the king and to the Babylonian kingdom.

The king was not a political movie but he was a master planner. The time had come and with great precision the multitude bowed low and prostrated they pledged their religions to the king and his golden image. From that huge gathering some were there out of conviction. Some were there out of fear. Anyway all came at his command. They were worshipping a man and golden likeness image but the three Hebrew men did not bow down at all. They were not afraid of any untoward thing because God was with them.

Their Hebrew names were Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah and their Babylonian names were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego which were forced upon them with the intention of turning them away from their living God. But their intension was different. They were in desperate condition because their nation was defeated, their capital city Jerusalem was sacked, their holy temple was destroyed and all the precious vessels from the temple were brought to Babylon and kept in their heathen temples. Finally, their living God was also mocked at. That was the pathetic situation of the captive Jews in Babylon at that time. So these three men did not care or value the command of the king and at the same time they were reminded of the first two commandments of their God. He said “Thou shall have no other gods before me and Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath – thou shall not bow down thyself to them nor serve them.” (Exodus 20:3-5)

Their genuine loyalty to their living God brought more enemies to them. Just at that time, some Chaldeans came and accused them. These Chaldeans were the priests of the heathen god “Belmerodach.” Since the three Hebrew men did not care to bow down before the image the priests wanted to take them to the notice of king for punishment. So they said “Oh king live for ever thou Oh king hast made a decree – there are certain Jews” – (Daniel 3:9-10). One can almost hear the contempt in their voices – certain Jews whom thou has set over the affairs of the province of Babylon (Daniel 3:12) it is as if they were saying to the king we warned you about these foreigners whom you appointed to rule over us. They have not regarded the nor they obeyed thy command to worship the golden image which thou has set up. It is sheer insubordination and this loyalty of the most heinous kind. You must take action. But they were in positions in the government and so they were given the second chance to prove their royalty. We know these three men were in some government posts in some province of the king and Daniel was sitting at the gate of the king’s palace. That is to say Daniel was in the inner circle or we might call “Cabinet post holding the position of the secretary of state.” His loyalty to the king was beyond doubt. He was exempted from the test of loyalty as required from outsiders. As mentioned in the Bible the three friends of Daniel were given the second chance to prove their loyalty to the king.

These people belonged to the despised and defeated race. Yet they were unconquerable even though they stood before the conqueror of the world of

their time. They saw the face of their God and they did not fear at the face of man. The king was somehow in angry mood because of the situation. He brought them as captives about 20 years ago from Israel. He gave them Babylonian names as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He gave them good education to make use of their services because of their intelligence. Then they were appointed in good positions in one of the promises. They enjoyed their positions like power privilege and wealth yet they did not forget their true and living God and refused to abandon their God for the king's god.

There was an immediate response to the command of the king and at the same time the unveiling threat for the disobeyed. In this context the few words uttered by the three friends remained as one of the courageous statements of the Bible history and it should remain as an encouragement and challenge to every blood – bought child of God. So they replied with no disrespect to the king. They said they did not require anymore time to answer him because it was already decided in their souls. At times some people used to pray to God over a complicated issue before they take any decision and there were some Biblical principles that solve the problems. They thought for awhile that the glory of their God was at stake. But they had not yet decided to answer the king.

At last they became bold enough and said “If it be so our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and He will deliver us out of their hand Oh king.” (Daniel 3:17) what a wonderful faith the three men had! It was a faith not merely speculative holding clear and orthodox views regarding God and His providential power. But faith practiced and really to be put to test. Danger and consequences of disobedience did not shake them. The prospects of death would not make their minds wavering. They must have thought this mortal life which might be terminated through violence but the eternal life was there after this. It is that courage and immutable faith which required for their everlasting life ahead. The final words the Hebrew men uttered before they were thrown into the burning furnace had glorious importance and proved their confidence “But if not (if our God does not choose to physically deliver us) be it known unto thee Oh king that we will not serve thy gods and worship the golden image which thou hast set us” (Daniel 3:18). Whatever might be the consequences these three men remained loyal to their Almighty God. It is beyond our imagination how much their courage and fidelity must have pleased their heavenly father. No doubt God felt very happy in His heart.

Anyway the king decided what was going to do with them. They openly disobeyed the king's order. They refused to bow down before the image. They had the audacity to speak about their God before the king. After all did he not possess absolute power? Did he not consider himself a god? The word of our God described the action of the king in the following words "And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats their hats their garments and finally cast them in to the midst of the burning fiery furnace." (Daniel 3:20-21). In that furnace the pitch between tar and sulphur were burning seven times hotter than normal. The flames were so hot that the soldiers who threw the three Hebrew men into the fire themselves consumed. But those three God chosen people were not afraid of any untoward incidents and they remained as a witness among heathens because of their faith even the fire could not do anything to them. So for those three men there were two options – either deliverance or martyrdom whichever God preferred according to His infinite wisdom and power.

On that memorable occasion the omnipotent God decided to deliver them and so used His right arm and saved them miraculously. The king wondered at the prompt action their God and enquired whether they cast three men or more. The soldiers threw only three men into the fire but the king saw four men walking freely in the fire and the fourth one being the son of God. Nebuchadnezzar was a peculiar character. In his astonishment he went near the furnace and addressed them as the servants of most high God and called them to come to him. The three faithful servants of God came to the king from the midst of the fire. When Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah came to the presence of the king he saw the fire had not harmed them. Their hair was intact and their clothes not damaged. There was not even smell of fire upon them (Daniel 3:27). Their deliverance had been accomplished totally through the fourth person who was no other than the son of God. This could be also presumed as the pre-incarnate appearance of an angel of God the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

So Nebuchadnezzar had to inevitably acknowledge the supremacy of their God as the most high God (ELEYON) stronger than all the Babylonian gods. The king indirectly accepted the greatness of their God and promoted them still to better positions in the province of Babylon. The writers who limited the accounts of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah regarding their fascinating story of faith and bravery about 500 years before the birth of Jesus missed the significance of the third chapter of Daniel who wished to teach urgent prophetic

truth to all believers. According to the Biblical prophecy the antichrist will arise at the end of the age. He will be the final ruler at the period of time called the period of Gentiles. As per the list of Gentile rulers Nebuchadnezzar was the first one depicted in the second chapter of Daniel through the great Colossus. At it is written the antichrist will set up an image in his own likeness (Mathew 24:15). Then he will demand the Jews of Israel to bow down to that image. All this would be done exactly did in the past Nebuchadnezzar.

The main purpose of all this was politically motivated by the master plan of the king. He wanted to bring the nation into his power completely as he wished and to become the world ruler. It appeared some Israelites liked this proposal and wanted to welcome him and his advances. The Israelites perhaps wanted to see him as a solution to their national problems. They must have trusted him as a leader who would bring world peace. If some of them refused to accept him as leader most of them would have martyrs and part of them delivered supernaturally. So the antichrist who wants to dominate the world according to his plan will try to kill all those who want to be loyal to the son of God.

The golden image was made by the king 500 years before the birth of Jesus Christ but the three Hebrew men with their spotless faith refused to bow down their heads before that image even though it would cost their lives. In the same way the a remnant of them will refuse to bow to the antichrist at the end of the age. The Lord in "His Olivet Discourse" wanted the remnant to flee to the mountains to avoid the brutal killing by the heathens. In those mountains they would be preserved by the divine intervention. The refusal of remnant Jews might frustrate the antichrist. So he would direct his fury against all believers worldwide. Anyway the three faithful Jews understood that God had delivered them from the fire. However He might allow them to receive the crown of martyrdom. The three men proved themselves as they would be faithful to the Almighty God under all conditions "And fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul but rather fear (have a reverent trust) him which is able to both soul and body in hell." (Mathew 10:28)

It may be true, wicked men kill the physical body that too if God permits. But it is God who determines the destiny of both glorified body and eternal soul. The powerful soldiers of the king who throw the trio into the fiery furnace themselves were consumed miserably by the flames. They received what they deserved for their inhuman action. It was like tit for tat. It was written again in

the following manner in the context of persecution of God's faithful three Hebrews by antichrist "he that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity." (Revelation 13:10) what the ungodly people tried to inflict on the sons and daughters of God will automatically inflict on themselves. It is a naked truth that the world cannot mess with God's children and cannot go away without receiving due punishment. True believers will not bow down to antichrist and his coming is nothing but Babylonianism. False believers by way of contrast will quickly capitulate at the prospects of difficulty and persecution. If we are prepared to suffer for Christ and if necessary even to die in the coming days then we are worthy to live triumphantly for Christ today.

The exact meaning of the three Hebrew men is as follows – Hananiah means "God is gracious" Mischael means "Who is what God is" Azariah means "Whom the Lord helps." These three were Hebrew names where as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were Babylonian names. At the end the preacher said these three Hebrew men did not bow, they did not bend and as a result they did not burn and the same result will continue for the faithful remnant of believers at the end.

Having witnessed the faith of the three Hebrew men which was like Abraham's even at the cost of their lives, let us try to make a decision in our hearts. Let us be loyal and faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ at all times. We must take unending pledge with our loyalty to our saviour Lord and our king Jesus Christ.

HISTORY OF JUDAISM

According to historical data, the Jewish population in the world is estimated about 15 million only. From this total, about 6 million are in America alone and 3 million in Israel. The remaining are spread in different parts of the world. These figures are referred to only Jewish families. This figure is no doubt a surprising to every reader, if we compare the influence Jews achieved in the world. Some of the wonderful things in history are three of the world major religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These were the descendants from the belief of the most significant of the political and cultural importance in their time.

If we look into the ancient history, we can find how great powers like Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Babylonia, Greek, Rome, etc... were collapsed miserably, but tiny obscure Jewish nation remain though it was regarded and the people as outsiders and strangely devoted to a peculiar practices and to their odd deity. The ancient empires and their religions were crushed and crumbled to death. But the religion of Jews had influenced millions of people. It is prophesized that in 2000 years half of the world population will become believers and this statement makes us to have confidence that it must be the power of the God Almighty.

The tragic event that has occurred because of its religious influence and it must have suffered incessant persecution primarily in the hands of its daughter Christianity. The main reason for this is because Judaism became a radical as well as religious phenomenon. But Christianity and Islam are not like that. According to their version, a Jew is one born to a Jewish family or one who possesses Jewish religion. Most of them were born Jews and the converts are very few as recorded. In the modern world, there are many Jews who abandoned their ancestral faith and customs. Judaism is a religion of single people and has accepted every aspect of Jewish life. There are some reasons for their persecution. They are not only for their religion but also they appeared to other people as outsiders and strangers in their way of life.

The Old Testament is nothing but the history of Jewish people. Great kings like David, great leaders like Moses, great women like Queen Esther, all disciples and all apostles were from Jewish community only. These people were chosen by God Himself, from the seed of Abraham father of many nations. The main purpose of God in this selection was to carry out the mission of bringing the people of the whole world into His service. "On the day of atonement"

one of the seven great festivals of God's chosen people prayer should be conducted. The aim of these prayers was for the conversion of the entire world into Judaism.

At that time many Jewish missionaries had actively tried for the spreading of Judaism especially during the reign of Romans but they could not stand before the Christian missionaries and Islam believers. Judaism is strictly monotheistic that is only one God. According to their feelings and the other God's are either fictitious or evil powers. The Jewish children when they were able to speak they would be taught the declaration of faith called "Shema" and a verse from the book of Deuteronomy 6th chapter. "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one" would be read. All the devoted Jews had to repeat this verse every morning and evening. The same verse is supposed to be said by the dying person also, when he is in conscious stage. Judaism is vehemently disapproved by the Christian worship of Christ and Trinity as departure from monotheism.

The next fundamental principle in the Jewish religion is giving due respect to the Holy Scripture the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament the Christians call it, especially, for the "Pentateuch" the first five books of the Old Testament pinned by Moses with God's guidance. They are also called "Torah" teaching. The Bible is the written Word of God by human beings inspired by God. The Torah has contained history of the world from its creation by God to the death of Moses at the sight of the promised land Canaan. The Torah also contained detailed rules and regulations given to Moses by God including the Ten commandments and moral rules which were concerned to animal sacrifices offerings observances of Sabbath rules for proper administration of justice and rules for social behavior among themselves in the society, etc.. The rules came into existence when rituals morals and customs were not separated for observation. When it is said, "Thou shall not kill" its effect is "Thou shall not cut" such noble sayings are there for the good behavior of Gods people.

Then "love thy neighbor" is another rule. It is also a rule for the menstruating woman who is unclean and may not be permitted to enter the Holy places until she has offered a lamb or pigeon or a dove to God. For all such traditional inheritance customs and to such rules this religion gave utmost importance and we can also say this Judaism is an ethical religion. Even prophets and teachers again and again insisted on the people the need for good behavior and genuine repentance for their wrong doings. This is more important than

the correct performance of rituals or strict observance of customs. The necessary rules of Judaism have for centuries formed a basic moral concept or code of the entire western world.

There is a famous story about a great teacher “Hellel”, who lived in the first century B.C. He was asked by a prospective convert to teach him the complete Torah while he was standing on one leg. Then Hellel answered the convert by saying “that which is hateful unto the do not do unto thy neighbor” This is the whole that he taught to that man. It is not clearly said about the history of Jews and when that religion began. But the main source is only the Bible that was able to give some matter regarding their history. The Bible also tells about the future plan of God for His chosen people. One of the oldest passages in Deuteronomy sixth chapter begins the history of Israel with a few, “Nomadic Semetic tribes men” went to Egypt settled there in a short time increased their population. In order to control the king of Egypt made them slaves. Then they remembered their God and cried unto to Him to save them and God with the mighty hand of Moses with terror and signs brought them to the Promised Land Canaan or also called Palestine at that time the land of milk and honey. Two wonderful things we can see at that time in this context – the tremendous and terrifying power of God and to make us to believe that Palestine is the God given land to Jewish people as their homeland. The Old Testament often personifies a group of people as individuals and Jacob personifies himself as the relation of Israel who occupied Palestine with his 12 sons as 12 tribes and one of them was (Yehude) Judah from whose name Jews derived. According to Biblical history Jacob was the descendant of Abraham who lived in the city of Ur in Mesopotamia and who left the city on the Word of God and settled in Hebron. God must have this plan since a long time to keep his descendants in that place to distinguish from others God wanted to introduce circumcision also. It is well known as mentioned in the history that the Semetic tribes men from Arabia had settled in Mesopotamia well before 2000 B.C. and the story of Abraham might represent the migration of a group of people from UR to Canaan in course of time. The traditions of Abraham and Jacob laid the foundation for undisputable historical figures like Moses.

Moses was the leader of Exodus from Egypt to Canaan the promised land and he was also called the greatest prophet in the Bible. He led Israelites traditionally identified as “Abel Musa” a high peak in the South of Senai Peninsula. Moses went up to the mount and received the Ten Commandments inscribed on blue stone the law God made His covenant and also blueprint for making

the Tabernacle by which He committed Himself Israel as His Holy nation and His kingdom of priests. The Israelites had spent 40 years in that desert forgot and their God Yehweh though He was guiding them all the way with Moses.

But somehow Moses would restore them to Yehweh and finally died in the sight of river Jordon without entering Canaan. The Israelites wept for him. After Moses Joshua led them by crossing the river Jordan with the Ark of covenant a portable wooden shrine made of Shittim wood. God wished to be present among His people by remaining in that Ark. They forced their way into the Canaanites and the Semitacs who had already occupied their land of Palestine. The ark of covenant was taken to Shiloh which finally became the centre of worship. This significant story can be taken as fundamentally most authentic and accurate account of the Jews regarding their past history. They had to worship only one God and no other God for them. What must have happened to the tribes who left Egypt and accepted Moses as their pattern and Moses influenced the god of storm and war. The Yehweh whose presence was sensed in lightening and in storm clouds on the mountains and who was perhaps worshipped by Medianites where Moses had his first experience of God. The Israelites were joined by another desert tribes for the invasion of Canaan still under Yehweh's patronage after they had settled in their promised land many of them returned to their own tribal gods and also attracted to the native Canaanite deities. This remarkable story horrified Yehweh. He urged them to cleave unto their God only who brought them from oppression of Egypt, gave them the Promised Land and appointed them for a special purpose in the history as said in the Bible when the Israelites had forgotten Yehweh they were defeated in the battle and when they repented and worshipped Him they won the battle. This shows God wanted to keep them in His control and they also realized that their defeat was their faithlessness toward Yehweh.

God is described in the Old Testament fundamentally a deity of giagenetic and horrifying force. This was clearly brought out on mount Sinai and in the story the powerful plagues which were sent onto the Egyptians to show His power to all heathens. The Ark in which God was travelling must be very powerful as nobody was dared enough to look into it except the priests. As recorded one person looked into it out of curiosity and died on the spot. Another such incident took place in Bethlehem and about 50000 people died in God's judgment. So the power of God is beyond human perspective. Whenever God was forced into war He exposed His massive destructive power over the enemies. Such unforeseen power used by God made Israel win the wars as a single religious

unity and against any enemy. This kind of results could take place only when Israelites were in the good books of God. The consequences of any war depended upon the loyalties of Israelites towards their Yehweh and also linked with the preservation of Israel as a nation and the Jewish concept of Holy war. And if we consider war, as second duty of God's purposes we should recollect how other Holy wars were fought in the past against each other between Christians and Muslims. God wanted to keep His children by using His power. It does not mean He has no love for them. Man is weak by nature especially before God. So he needs proper guidance love and affection from God as small children need support from their parents.

God will take care of us because we are His children. Yehweh in the Old testament is not only violent in nature but also merciful and benevolent towards human kind. He appears in low voice as well as...in fire and storm. He is the father of His people so expects discipline and conduct from them. To keep His people in control sometimes He would expose to foreign aggression so that they might remember their godfather and cry unto Him for help. Then God with all His patience and royalty towards His children would save them from any danger. The most remarkable and praise worthy leaders at that time and also lawgiver to Jews was the great prophet Moses. He was considered to be the divine blessed leader and the prophet of east.

But in Jerusalem there is no room for such good people. In Jewish tradition a prophet as a man supposed to meet God frequently and then bring some good tidings as a spokesman of God. He was supposed to reveal to people how God looks like and what God commanded His people to do for His favor and also the prophet has to explain to the people what is going to happened to them in future. Moses was considered the earliest ancient prophet of Jews. There is one peculiar characteristic in Jerusalem unlike other kingdoms in the world. It has the strange blend of monotheism nationalism and a moral code.

During the eleventh century all the Jewish leaders planned for a king and monarchy for Israel like other countries around because they were disgusted with the rule of judges. Accordingly the descendant of Benjamin, Saul became the first king of Israel but somehow he became selfish and ruled against Gods will and so he was killed in the battle for his selfishness. The next king was David. He was a great warrior and established his kingdom most successfully by acquiring major part of Palestine and stormed the Canaanites also. He got the hill fortress of Jerusalem which he made his capital. In addition to that, he

brought the Ark of covenant from “Shelloh” with all the pomp and glory in a big procession and in extreme joy. King David also danced with others in the public. As we see in the Bible king David was worthy to be kept as next national leader after Moses. He proved himself as an efficient and most successful king. He earned good name and fame in Jewish history.

King David was succeeded by his son Solomon who was called the richest and wisest king in his time. He was specially known for his wisdom, wealth, infatuation for foreign heathen women his construction of magnificent Gods temple with the Holy of Holies were note worthy. Because of the construction of Gods costliest temple Jerusalem became the most sacred city in the world. And also because of Gods chosen people and the Holy temple were there, it became the geographical and spiritual center of the world. As recorded in the history the major part of book of Genesis was written and compiled from earlier traditions during the time of king Solomon in which the full details of Gods creation and the planning of the world. The concept of God as a creator of universe and planner of the whole world is one of the main reasons to distinguish the Judaic religion from other religions. The world had the beginning and also will have an end. It was made by a maker and the creator and said “It was good” as mentioned in the Bible in the book of Genesis. As said above, the moral of the statement speaks about as neither evil nor pointless but our life has divine origin and some purpose behind it. Life is good and it shall be good and Atheism has no room in Judaism. King Solomon though treated by the world leaders as the wisest man on earth had his own weaknesses he became a womanizer and took 700 women as wives and kept 300 women as concubines. In addition to that he lived with Queen of Sheba also and got a son through her according to history. God did not want to leave Solomon unpunished for his too many heathen wives and his idol worship. So he cursed him by saying that his kingdom would be divided into two after his death.

Accordingly, a Northern kingdom was formed with 10 tribes called the kingdom of Israel with Samaria as the capital and Jeroboam as the king likewise the Southern kingdom was formed with two tribes of Judah and Benjamin which was called the kingdom of Judah with Jerusalem as its capital and Rehoboam son of king Solomon became the king but within a short time wars continued between the two kingdoms They, struggled for their powers and the existence. In the meantime, Sargon 11 of Assyria occupied northern kingdom and deported thousands of Israelites to the Mesopotamia, Iran, etc... and these Israelites who were deported in due course had vanished into the limbo (means

a situation from which one cannot decide what to do next). They became once and for all the last tribe of Israel and they were forgotten as Israel forever. They were replaced history by the Assyrian settlers who intermarried with the surrounding Northern (Israelites) to form a people called Samaritans on whom the Southern Jews developed complete hatred towards them and that hostility has been continued for centuries. They were looked down upon as if they were outcast. The Southern kingdom of Judah was also controlled by Assyrians at different times then by Egyptians and Babylonians and in 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed the temple and city of Jerusalem. He took away all gold things and thousands of men as captives to Babylon.

According to Yehweh it is believed that troubled history of both kingdoms was due to continuous lapses from the monotheism of many kings and people who went on “Whoring” of foreign gods and worshipping them as well as Yehweh simultaneously. The same blunder was committed by king Solomon also who imported (foreign) Egyptian and Canaanite gods and goddesses along with his wives. The Israelites who settled in Palestine became good agriculturalists the kings of both Israel and Judah used to pay homage to Canaanite god Baal, the god of storm and winter rains and his concept was goddess Acherah. Their blind belief was that they would get good rains for their crops. Eliza was a prophet who lived at that time when Ahab and Jezebel as wife and husband ruling Israel. It was typical heathen family Eliza means (Yehweh is God). The prophet attacked Ahab and Jezebel for encouraging the cult of Baal and Acherah, with such a ferocity. We all know how the great prophet won the wonderful victory over the priests of Baal on the mount of Carmel by calling down the lightening from heaven which the priest could not do that. This incident made Ahab and his wife terribly angry upon the prophet and he had to flee from their sight in order to save his life.

The Assyrians became a menace to the people of Northern kingdom. They turned fully towards idol worship. In such a typical situation prophets like Amos, Isaiah, Micah came forward to set right the Jewish nation as far as possible. They planned to bring them back to their true and living God. They did not care for surrounding events but spoke strongly in support of the Jewish religion. The heart of that prophetic message was so powerful that it came from God the king of heaven who rules the world. Apart from that God is Holy moral being, the God of righteousness, the God of justice, and of compassion, and of descent living with His creative humanity. So these four prophets attacked vehemently the worship of foreign God's.

They checked the secular and naturalistic way of life. They checked the luxury and exploitation of the poor. They felt that this exploitation had inflicted Israel more as the consequences of their settled life in Palestine and wealth from foreign trades. The prophets expressed that “Sin” means not only doing crime or offending others by any means but even breaking the laws of God come under that. We may think “Sin” means ritual or moral transgression but the prophets stressed more on moral behavior. “He had showed you O man what is good and what does. The Lord requires of you, but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with our God.” As God is always righteous, He expects the same from His people though Indian religious no doubt do not condemn immorality seriously. Judaic religion puts more emphasis on “Sin” an intolerance behavior on the part of man against God. It is like a barrier between God man between man and salvation that is to say, the Judaic religion gave more importance to sexual morality. The strange characteristic of Jewish God in the opinion of foreigners is that He has no wife no goddess as a Queen. And also He has no family, no biography and no visible representation, no making of images of God, which is strictly prohibited in Jewish law. So this Jewish God could not have a consort like heathen god Baal and Indian gods, because “Yahwehuism” was monotheistic. The hidden fact is that God is above sex and it gives impression of ungodliness.

When God created man and woman with different sex, He had some plan in His mind. His plan was continuation of humanity including all spices in nature and other than this is nothing but sexual abuse. The Babylonian captives continued there for about 120 years and some of them were deported to Mesopotamia and to other places. Some of them were well prospered in exile and some of them never returned to Palestine. But they were not prevented from their religious practices and at the same time some Jews became idol worshippers. Some of them who had strong faith used to say “we sat by the waters of Babylon and wept and added O Jerusalem if I forget you let my right hand wither.”

But prophet Ezekiel comforted then by saying that they would be taken to their homeland one day. The situation was such Jerusalem had no king, no Temple, and even the religion was only the scripture. With this, we can understand how far the people could remember the Old Testament and in a short time to the good luck of the Jews. Babylon was conquered by the Persian king Cyrus the great and then Palestine became part of Achaemenid Empire. As

a result, king Cyrus allowed some of the exiled Jews to return to their desolated Jerusalem.

Then under the leadership of Zerubbabel and some others, started rebuilding of the city and the Temple even though there was some obstruction and Yehweh returned to His earthly home and king Cyrus was kind enough to send back the remaining Jews also to Jerusalem from Babylon including all Temple utensils and Menorah the seven lighted stand. For about two hundred years Judah around Jerusalem region became Persian province and Jerusalem was under the imperial influence of Zoarstrian ideas. The monarchy was not restored in their rule and the immediate political authority came into the hands of high priest in Jerusalem. And he was supported by aristocratic priestly families. Outside Judah also there were some Jewish communities in Babylonian and Egypt. Just at that time, Achalminean Empire fell into the hands of Alexander the great a famous Greek Emperor and his successors kept Judah in their control for another two hundred years.

During this period, the Jews were attracted to the current Hellenistic culture with its mingling of gods religious and philosophies from Greece, Mesopotamia, Syrian, Iran and Egypt. Some of the Jews almost became slaves to that culture but some bluntly refused to accept. These two groups among Jews continued for sometime. Then this Hellenizing trend reached its pinnacle under a particular priest who took the Greek name "Jason" He tried even to change Jerusalem as Greek city. In such circumstances some young artist tolerance and priests who gave more importance to traditions resorted to surgery to make themselves to appear uncircumcised. There were roits everywhere. These conditions forced the seduced ruler Antiochus who called himself Epiphanies. The manifest of God came to Jerusalem to restore peace and order by his power(Epiphany is the name of a Christian festival that comes on January 6th in memory of time when magic three wise men came to see baby Jesus in Bethlehem.)

He supported Jason for his steps against Jews and decided to restore order in his dominions by stamping out Jewish religion circumcision observance of Sabbath and other Jewish customs totally prohibited. He made all traditions null and void and Jerusalem's Holy Temple was changed into a sanctuary of "Zeus" a Greek sky God. Then pigs were sacrificed to that god on the great altar of Yehweh. Then the prostitutes were installed in the Temple of God. The profanation the abomination of desolation as it was called touched the wounded

hearts of Jews. The result is their reaction was immediate and fierce. Five brothers of Hasmanean family led by Judas known as Maccabaeus the Hammerer conducted a successful war against Syrians.

The result of the war was that the enemies were driven out of Jerusalem. The Temple was purified and rededicated to God in 165 B.C. this remarkable incident was commemorated ever since at Hanukkah, the festival of lights and that used to be lustrated in December with this the Jews achieved the right to observe their religious customs and in 142 B.C. got their independence under Simon the last of Maccabaeus brothers as a high priest and ruler. Still the dispute continued and in the mean time the Romans interfered under the leadership of Pompey the great.

He stormed Jerusalem and thousands of people were slaughtered like animals at the altar of Yehweh now Judah was swallowed by Roman authorities and ruled by puppet rulers and one of them was Herod the great. He became notorious for political murders and too many wives and marriages. Any way he was successful in maintaining peace. He rebuilt God's Temple in a magnificent way. But it is said he died of some repulsive disease and people thought. He died such obscure death for his inequalities. When Jews were in such turmoil and suffering during the second and first centuries B.C. some scholars expected God to send a savior Messiah, a redeemer or the anointed one, a king of the house of David who would lead Israel in victory over foreign oppressors and tormentors. According to the prophecy foreign nations would be converted to Yehweh and the Messiah establish His kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital and it would be called the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and prosperity.

The ideal kingdom of David in the past would be projected as future kingdom of Messiah as a superhuman figure but not as a divine one and he would be called the son of David. The concept of last victory was translated by some writers into a picture of great battle between cosmic powers forces of light and forces of darkness. Some people believed that after triumph God would destroy the old world and create a new one. It would be an ideal world of holiness beauty, fertility, and happiness. It would remain forever. It was also believed by some elite that not only faithful who will be living at that time but also the faithful who died already see the newly established kingdom of God. The older Jewish traditions were concerned with the destiny and ultimately triumph of the nation as a whole not with the salvation of individual man and woman but the main purpose of living was only to serve God by multiplying

the Holy nation by increasing the population. The time from the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD to the end of fifth century came to limelight another authentic book called "Talmud". It was compelled with details regarding the way of life of Jews and their faith. But it was only next to the Bible. The Talmud recorded about learned people in rabbis the correct interpretation of scriptures, the right living of daily life including ethical rules of diet and hygiene regulation for services and festivals. The Talmud was also like a treasure with sermons model stories legends and popular love lores. Though the Bible is considered ultimate authority regarding the lifestyle of Jews they treated Talmud also another Bible. It contained various items connected to their daily life.

In spite of frequent changes during all these centuries Talmud remained as a book of traditional Jewish devotions and rites. Most of the orthodox and liberal Jews observed the covenants of this book even today. But the present day, tendency is that people want the customs interpreted symbolically the obligation of the devoted person is that he should think about God every morning for giving him another day in his life because it is God's gift. Next, he must wash both of his hands and say grace before every meal. Actually, the rules concerning to food are really complicated. Prayers are to be conducted in the morning afternoon and evening. If anybody wants to be strict in observing all this code of contact he must bear fringed garments to show that he is completely consecrated himself to God. He must observe each day in the following manner. He must wear fringed shawl during morning prayers called Tallib and all the week days the Teflil on the head and arm near the heart. Some small boxes would be kept with some wise sayings from the Bible which were written in Hebrew language on parchments. The prime importance of this is to instruct the faithful to love God and to his mind hand and heart to His services. Prayers had to be done to God everyday in Hebrew language in synagogues. At that time the worshippers must keep their heads covered to show their reverence to God. The Temple and synagogues are the same as far as the establishments were concerned. There would be continuous light in the synagogues like the light of menorah in the temple because God created light. The scrolls of Torah handwritten would be kept hanging along with Turenkling silver bells in the Ark at the last end at the time of Sabbath service reading scriptures prayers and sermons would take place. The scrolls would be taken from the Ark at that time and carried them in a procession around the congregation that remain standing. At that time they would recollect past great festivals like Passover which indicate the rebirth of Israelites. They used to

celebrate this Passover festival as if it was their birthday. They would eat only unleavened bread and bitter herbs as remainder of their oppression of slavery in Egypt and drink wine to forget their sorrow and come to enjoy the life of freedom.

In the autumn season they would celebrate the festival of "Sukkoth." They would also observe a New Year festival called "Rash Hashanah" as the birthday of the world and the anniversary function of the creation. The "Shofar" the rams horn trumpet would be blown in Synagogues to hail God as the king of the whole world and to call mankind to His presence. After that prayers were conducted for a prosper and happy New Year to come then the next ten days they would spend their time in admitting their sins and repent for them. They prayed to God for His forgiveness also. In this period of introspection and the confession of their faith would culminate in the day of Yon Kippur or the Day of Atonement. It is said in Palestine the sins of people ritually kept on the head of a goat and then drive it into the desert. The devotees would not eat anything on that day but spend that day in prayers in synagogues where their sins were confessed. Finally, the festival would end with the blowing of the Shofar to atone means literally to become at one with God through repentance and His forgiveness. On this day God's presence is clearly sensed by all devotees though there was periodical persecution and harassment. The intellectuals flourished well in some Muslim countries like Spain and Egypt. But during middle ages those people had some tolerance towards monotheistic religion of Judaism yet these people did not believe in Christianity. And with the compilation of Talmud Judaism became stronger in the sight of people. For years, the Jews who settled Christian European countries there was a radical change because of the crusaders. The Fanaticism of Christian against Muslims automatically spread among Jews also. Many stories were spread among Christians about Jews slaughtering children and used their blood for secret rites. These conditions forced Jews to live in Ghettoes and big walled quarters. Another important thing in the case of Jews was that they became popular in the public as money lenders but due to that above said position the Jews stopped giving money to Christians. As a result they were expelled from European countries. Many fled from Germany and many more massacred in the polish war against Russian and Sweden. Then the partition of Poland in eighteenth century put one million Jews under Russian rule who happened to settle in the area from the "Baltic to the black sea at Odessa." But the Jewish prostitutes were allowed freely to settle wherever they wanted.

There are many more incidents of different people and the harassment faced by them for centuries in European countries. It is said some parts of Europe Jewish woman were forced to wear dressed with bells at the bottom so that they would be distinguished wherever they moved. Such a miserable life they led for many years. Above all, the most pathetic was killing of six million Jews by Hitler during the Second World War by keeping them in the concentrated camps. This is really a land mark in Jewish history. However, in nineteenth century the Western Europe saw some freedom from the medieval countries. The eighteenth century worship of reason carried it and they gave more importance to tradition and demanded freedom, tolerance, and inequity by granting liberty and brotherhood Napoleon opened all the Ghettoes in Europe and the Jews after they were liberated from Ghettoes tried to contribute their might in the field of philosophy, science, art and scholarship in the west. The founding father of this school of thought and reformed movement was a philosopher and educator “Moses Mendelssohn” who spent most of his life in Brittan and he was treated as German Plato. He condensed the fundamentals of Judaism in to three brief points. Belief in God’s providence or plan for the world and in the immortality of the soul. His translation of Pentateuch (the five books of Moses or Torah) in to German language encouraged the German Jewish people to speak German freely instead of “Yeddish.” The Jewish German vernacular and to think of themselves as Germans and as well Jewish. The outcome of this reformation was that the first reformed Temple was constructed in Germany in 1810 but his name was not like the old synagogue. The reformed movement which flourished well in the united states particularly set out to modernize the faith and simplify the ritual to Jews who had come from the ghettos who wished to live with non Jews with their equal terms. The reformation teachers considered many of the Jewish traditional rules observances and dieting rulers, customs were all unnecessary.

But all these reformation principles were bitterly opposed by some orthodox Jews and openly criticized their abandoning Jewishness. The religion was reduced to a vague ethical monotheism and encouraged apostasy. The orthodox Jews strongly believed that Torah came directly from God and so they should not forget that truth. There are three divisions of Jews in the United States today with their own pattern of synagogues and school of thought they are – reform, orthodox, and conservative. On the other hand many western Jews have accepted Christianity or seized to follow any faith. The result of that was the revival of Jewish powerful nationalism was created with a demand for

creation of a new Jewish state. The effective founder of this Zionist movement was “Theodor huze” he was a Hungarian Jewish journalist who called himself for the establishment of a home for the Jewish people in Palestine with the help of international law. Then the first Zionist congress was held in Switzerland and that movement was attended and received strong support from oppressed Jews in the Eastern Europe.

The orthodox Jews approved this Zionism and appealed to other Jews who have already lost faith in their religion. After 1917 the British government pledged unconditional support to Jews and then they began to emigrate to Palestine which was already fully occupied by Arabs, who had settled centuries ago. Actually who must have been responsible for the success of Zionism? It was the unparalleled massacre of Jews in Germany by the dictator Adolf Hitler at that time who brutally killed six million Jews during the second world war. He did this heinous crime with the help of other Germany occupied countries. It is really more than one third of the world Jewish population. The previous opponents of Zionism have changed their minds and called for the state of Israel and it was declared in 1948 by the British government. Zion has regained its promised land after 200 years of exile and depression. It became once more Jewish land and within 10 years period about one million Jews from 60 countries returned to their homeland (Israel). Zionism is as a matter of fact a political but not a religious movement. Still it appealed to the sentiments echoed the towering promises of the prophets in the Bible.

Actually, there are Zionists who saw and still who see the creation of Israel’s divine mission for the coming of the kingdom on the earth. The state of Israel was Israel’s achievement. The people have given to Jewish communities a fresh hope and confidence in their national and religious conditions.

BUILDING OF THE SECOND TEMPLE

According to the historical and the Biblical information the construction of the second Temple was started on the same day of Babylonian army burnt the first Temple called Solomon's Temple. And on the same foundations it was constructed. From that very day of the destruction and taking away many wise and young men as captives to Babylon the limited member of Jews in Jerusalem did not stop weeping. They humbly begged God for His mercy and have His Temple again. On the other hand the exiled Jews in Babylon turned their faces toward Jerusalem Temple and requested God in their prayers to take them back to Israel so that they would rebuild His Holy House. The marks made by the Babylonian army clearly indicated that the damage done to the Temple was beyond to their imagination and most barbarous.

So the Temple remained in that desolate condition for some decades. Added to that most of the Jews lived out of their native land for centuries and also the throne of king David remained vacant after the last Davidic dynastic ruler Zedekiah who brutally killed by the king Nebuchadnezzar. Now let us study briefly the history of the second Temple and its construction after the return of the exiled Jews after seventy years. According to history, the Persian king Cyrus the Great defeated Babylon and sent back the exiles to Judah. Actually 'Babel' was the Hebrew name for Babylon, which became the capital city of the Babylonian kingdom and this same Babylon later became the central Iraq. We can see in the Bible the king Nimrod was the founder of this ancient city. He was called the mighty and powerful king of his time.

We see in the Bible, how people built the tower of Babel with his guidance to worship the terrestrial heavenly bodies like the sun, the moon and stars. The result was that God saw the structure and confused their languages and checked rebellious idolaters. The glory of that Babylonian kingdom reached its pinnacle during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. He ruled for 43 years and became most powerful king on the earth. Babylon's city was of 350 feet high brick walled and 15 miles long on all sides that was done for the protection of one million people is worth to note. This wonderful city was well known to the world for its beauty, for its paved streets, massive walls, and the temple of Marduk god. Its beautiful Ishtar gate was carved with turquoise white and gold glazed tiles in a design of golden lions and bulls. Above all Babylonian most wonderful hanging gardens were considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Such name and fame came to an end, when the united kingdom of Persia and Media, waged war against Babylon in 534 B.C. The Persian Empire was spread from Egypt to India and as far North of the modern Turkey Persia remained as a powerful kingdom for about 200 years, until it was changed into modern Iran in 1935. Media was located in north western part of Iran today. This Media was also conquered by Cyrus in 550 B.C. But the good relationship between the two countries prompted them to merge into one vast country as Medo-Persia. Prophet Daniel gave a clear picture in the 5th chapter of his book how this Babylonian empire fell into the hands of Persia on the fateful night. It happened on a national holiday when King Belshazzar hosted one thousand princes of his kingdom in honour of Babylonian gods.

Belshazzar, without caring for the presence of the Persia army outside the strong walls of the city, ordered for the vessels that were brought from the Holy Temple of Jerusalem, by Nebuchadnezzar. The king kept those gold and silver vessels in the Temple of Marduk, one of their gods for decades. The cups were given to all princes that Belshazzar drank wine with pride and arrogance as pride goes before ones fall. He exhibited his invincible nature, the greatness of his gods, and the strength of his army. This was treated as a supreme blasphemy and sacrilege against the Holy God of Heaven. The sacred vessels were also desecrated by the hands of idolatrous gentiles as they engaged themselves in the act of drunken debauchery in those sacred gold cups and honoured the man made gods.

Then all of a sudden, a large hand appeared visible from the wrist of the fingers. The hand floated above the lamp stand along the side wall of the banquet hall. After that the fingernail of its extended index finger wrote four Aramaic words, into the wall lit plaster. This scene created horror in the face of the king. His eyes were wide open desperately. His golden cup with wine was still at his lips. The blood drained totally from his face and the wine cup fell to the ground. Belshazzar fell to his seat and his legs began to shiver and became uncontrollable. There was a total disturbance in the entire banquet hall. Then people began to look at the strange words on the wall. Those words are Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.

Belshazzar, then called for an emergency meeting of all his astrologers for the interpretation of that strange message from the God. They discussed among themselves but could not give satisfactory answer to the king. He became angry and restless. He cursed them for their failure. In such condition his mother

'Nitocris', the Queen of Babylon, tried to console him, but advised him to call for Daniel, who was made chief of all Wisemen during the reign of his father. She also certified that Daniel had wisdom to understand anything better than all.

Daniel was called for and he stood before Belshazzar who offered him the third highest position in the kingdom. Daniel gladly accepted to interpret the meaning of those four Aramian words but refused the personal gain.

Daniel revealed that the message was not from his gods like Bel Marduk or Nabee, but from the Most High God, the Lord of Heaven and sovereign over all kingdoms on earth. Daniel without any fear rebuked the king and said that he was responsible for the message as he rebelled against the one "True God" and added the reason for God's anger for he desecrated the vessels of the Holy Temple with his arrogance. And also Belshazzar praised his false gods and refused to give glory to the sovereign God. So the message concerning his downfall appeared at that time.

Finally Daniel explained the words on the wall in the following manner. God had numbered (Mene) the days of Belshazzar's reign and it was now finished. God had weighed Tekel him and found him unfit to rule and now God had divided (Parsin). Belshazzar's kingdom between the Medes and the Persians. So Mene, Tekel, Parsia - these Aramian words means the days of the rule of Belshazzar were numbered, weighed and divided. God's judgement is always balanced and brief. He had numbered weighed and divided His punishment on Belshazzar the king of Babylon. The main reasons, the Babylonian army destroyed God's House. Belshazzar willingly blasphemed God by the desecration of the vessels of the Holy Temple. On these two reasons God wanted to take vengeance against Babylon. As Daniel explained correctly the meaning of those words what he said was fulfilled.

The Medo-Persia army planned a strategy to breach the strong walls of Babylon. They patiently waited till the end of the festival they were celebrating inside. The army dug a trench up stream and temporarily diverted the water of the Euphrates into a swampy area. Then the army entered the city through the shallow water at the water tunnel. The Persian army attacked the city and immediately killed Belshazzar. So on October 12, 539 B.C. Babylon was surrendered to Cyrus. The result was Darius, the Medes, got the appointment as the king under him for the newly captured Babylon.

Prophet Daniel quoted the example of the longing desire of the remaining Jews and the desolate condition of the Temple. He himself was a captive, a Judean, a Davidic prince, and a close relative of the sons of king Josiah. He was taken as a captive in the first batch of deportation in 605 B.C. He was taken to Nebuchadnezzar's place while he was in his teens (a teenaged boy). He was given training to be an official in the Babylonian government. Even after the conquest of Babylon by the Persian army Daniel retained his official post and became the highest of three presidents. He was supposed to report only to king Darius. Prayer was a moral bending in the case of Daniel as a believer who had deep rooted faith in God. He continued his regular duty of praying to God three times a day, though it was banned by the Persian law which carried a death penalty by wild lions.

The most astonishing thing is that the pattern of prayer followed by Daniel was still in existence with some people that is praying three times a day. This Jewish custom of three times prayer would take us back to King David who clearly said "Evening and morning and at noon will I Pray" (Psalms 55:17) Daniel prayed to God by turning his face towards the destroyed location of the Holy Temple. As a matter of fact this pattern of prayer was organized at the dedication of the first Temple when King Solomon asked the Lord to have His people when they shall pray towards this place (1 Kings 8:30).

In the year 539 BC the Persian rule started in Babylon. Daniel wholeheartedly and with more concern prayed to God for his people. He could know through the prophecy of prophet Jeremiah that God wanted to keep Jerusalem and the people in desolation for seventy years. Daniel believed that he and the other exiles were in seventieth year. Yet it seemed there was no regret nor repentance in those people. Israel had not yet turned to God and so God might extend the exile indefinitely to punish them more. Daniel understood how the first year of Persian rule was (539BC) and it was exactly the seventieth year of the desolation of Jerusalem.

Just at that critical time EZRA came into picture and commented that the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled in the first year of Persian rule. Jeremiah also prophesied that seventy years of exile would result the fall of Babylon. It is said "when seventy years are accomplished that I will punish the king of Babylon" (Jeremiah 25:11-12).

So, the seventy years of Jerusalem desolation started in 606 B.C. with the first deportation but not from the second deportation that took place in

597 BC, nor the third deportation with the total destruction of the Temple in 586 BC. After the fall of Babylon prophet Daniel sincerely prayed to God and mourned with sack clothes and ashes. He confessed his sin and the sin of his people. He humbly urged God to restore the Holy Temple. He prayed "O Lord according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech thee let Thy anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary, that is desolate for the Lords sake" (Daniel 9:16-17). It is said in (James 5:16) that the continuous prayer of Daniel brought a quick answer from God and the position of exiles was changed almost by overnight.

Now the rule of Cyrus the great was quite different. He declared liberty and allowed people to go to their homelands. In the first year of his reign God prompted the king Cyrus to say, "The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem which is in Judah (EZRA 1:2). King Cyrus declared his decree in the whole Persia empire and wrote it into the laws of Medes and the Persias the decree was given so much importance that it was quoted four times in scripture also. (2chronicles 36:21-23, EZRA 1:2-4, 5:13-15, 6:3-5)

The declaration of king Cyrus contained five more important points.

- 1) The Temple should be rebuilt in Jerusalem; Cyrus received that by command from the Lord.
- 2) The Jews who were exiled would be freed to return to Jerusalem. And the total number of people that returned to their homeland in the first stage were 42,360.
- 3) The Temple would be rebuilt on the same location and on the same foundation of the first Temple. The king clearly mentioned the dimensions of the Temple also.
- 4) Finance would be provided by the Persia government for the purchase of required materials for the Temple and for initial sacrifices.
- 5) The holy vessels that were taken away by Nebuchadnezzar during his attack would be returned safely. Cyrus released the treasures which the former king plundered and kept in the Temple at his god Marduk. The release of the vessels of the Temple was the fulfilment of the Lord's promise to preserve and return the Jews to their home land.

The king then commanded the treasury officials to prepare the list of the vessels of the Temple that they had at that time. But they could give the list of only some they are :

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|-------|
| 1) Gold basins | - | 30 |
| 2) Silver basins | - | 1,000 |
| 3) Pans of censers | - | 29 |
| 4) Gold bowels | - | 30 |
| 5) Silver bowels | - | 410 |
| 6) Other large items | - | 1,000 |

But the total they gave is 5,400 which is different from the above mentioned number of items.

Cyrus the great brought to an end the seventy year old exile as fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy. He also ordered for rebuilding of the Temple. In this connection, the readers may get some doubt, whether God asked Cyrus to build a house for Him in Jerusalem. We have no authentic information either from the scripture or from Cyrus that he got a vision where in God asked him to build His Temple. Actually about 190 years earlier God declared in the scripture "Cyrus, He is my shepherd and shall perform all my pleasure even saying to Jerusalem; Thou shalt be built; and to the Temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Isaiah 44:28). The prophecy of Isaiah was nothing but the command of God which Cyrus mentioned in his decree. Cyrus really did not know God, personally. But God knows Cyrus and used him as an instrument for His purpose like liberating the captives from Babylon.

Scripture is more than history of religious commentary, whereas Bible is God's message to mankind. Cyrus was aware of prophecy of Isaiah in the scripture, which he was commanded with his name to rebuild the God's Temple. Then Cyrus proclaimed by honouring the prophecy of Isaiah in the scripture as it was the Word of God. The main idea of the prophecy was that he should build a house for God in Jerusalem. Though Cyrus permitted the Jews to go to their native land only ten percent of them wanted to go, and the others wished to remain in Babylon itself with their properties etc.

The desired Jews started to go back to Judah or Zion in the spring season of 538 BC. The Persian king officially sanctioned the province of Yehud or Judah for their settlement. They were led by Zerubbabel as their leader. He was, also like Daniel, a leading prince of Judah from Davidic dynasty and with that

background Zerubbabel was appointed as Persian governor to Judah. He lost the chance to become the king because of his grandfather Jehoiachin or Jeconiah. Zerubbabel was also called with the Persian name “Sheshbazzar”. It is said the treasures of the Temple were also sent through him because he came to Judah in the capacity of the governor.

The emperor Cyrus gave power to Zerubbabel even to lay the foundation for the second Temple. Joshua Ben, the high priest and spiritual leader assessed him to reach Zion. The lineage of Joshua Ben was continued from Zadok, the first high priest of Solomon’s Temple. As the captives returned after 70 years of gap, the condition of the houses and the land was really heartbreaking, because the total destruction took place in 586 BC. The ruins of the Temple mount also gave the impression as if it was beyond any repair. They had no houses to reside and the land was unfit for cultivation. Such hardships, they had to face after they returned from captivity.

Even the location of the Temple became beyond recognition because of the unwanted plants that grew there. It is said even the jackals made their dens in the rubbles. Prophet Jeremiah happened to see that in its extreme desolation and mourned. The hearts of returned captives were melted at the scene and moved to give a sacrificial offering of gold and silver that they had in order to begin the construction work immediately. They thought first of all it would take months just to clean the debris from the inner court around the altar.

Zerubbabel and Joshua called the nation to gather in Jerusalem in the seventh month to celebrate the final feasts of the Hebrew year the feast of Trumpets the feast of Yom Kippur or the feast of atonement and the feast of Tabernacle. According to Hebrew calendar these three festivals would come in the seventh month called “Tishri.” So on the first day of the month Tishri they would build altar on the exact location and permit the priests to restart the sacrifices. Then the Temple construction was started on the same foundations with the money granted by the king Cyrus. The foundation was laid in 537 BC in the second month called “Iyyar” and that comes during (April-May) in our calendar.

Soon after the completion of the foundations, the Temple priests with their garments conducted the sacrifices and they were happy. But some elder people wept in despair as they found no former beauty in appearance like the first Temple. Then a strong opposition came from the people of hill country North of Jerusalem for the continuation of the construction. About two centuries

before this, in 721 BC the northern kingdom Israel fell into the hands of Assyrians. At that time most of the Israel were deported to different places and some foreigners occupied their important place called Samaria. The remaining Israelites happened to inter marry the settled foreigners and their offspring's were called Samaritans and these cross breed Samaritans practised both Judaism and idolatry. They came to know the Jews were rebuilding the Holy Temple and tried to join them. They requested Zerubbabel Let us build with you for we seek your God as ye do and we do sacrifices unto Him since the days of "Esarhaddon" king of Assur which brought us up hither (EZRA 4:2) However, they practised a perverted form of worship. They made sacrifices in the pattern of idol worship on the altars the mountains. Their priesthood was not from Levite families, which was against the law of God. So they were almost enemies to Jews in the pattern of worship and they wanted their own method of worship in the rebuilt of the Temple.

Having understood the crooked plan of the Samaritans, Zerubbabel and Joshua bluntly refused their assistance in any manner. They also told the Samaritans that they were rebuilding the Temple on the command of the king Cyrus. Later the Samaritans built their own Temple on Mount 'Gere zim' according to history. Since they were rejected by the Jews to take part in the construction, they planned to take revenge by hook or by crook. With the pretext of loyal citizens they wrote a letter to the king, where in they did not say anything about the Temple, but they accused the Jews by saying that they were fortifying Jerusalem for their safety and then rebel against Persia as they did previously against Babylon. At that time Artaxerxes, the son of Cyrus, was the king. They wanted to stop the construction by any means. As the king was not aware of this issue, he gave orders for the immediate stop of the construction of any type in Jerusalem. The Samaritans went even to Jerusalem to stop any progress on the order of the king. As a result the Temple remained with foundation for seventeen years. So, all the returned Jews became restless and helpless. In addition to this the land became unfit for cultivation because of seventy years gap. They had no houses to live in. They had no weapons to defend themselves from enemies like the Samaritans.

When Darius 1 became the king of Persia in 520 BC, there were some rapid changes. God raised some of His prophets like "Haggai" and "Zechariah." The time had come for the people to trust in God and do the necessary help to resume the work of the Temple. The name "Haggai" means 'festive' this reference shows that he must have born in one of the festivals of Israel. He also wished

his people to enjoy the holiday in the Temple with the command of God. Haggai was the first Hebrew prophet. He prophesied only when he came to Zion and nobody knew anything about his family background. But among his people Jews he showed himself as the Lord's messenger (Haggai 1:1, 1:13). He did not know anything about the first Temple, as he was born in the captivity in Babylon.

Haggai's prophecy is preserved in two chapters in the Bible, the second shortest book of Hebrew scripture and the first one is "Obadiah." He was a minor prophet. His book contained only four messages. The first message he gave on "Rosh Hodesh." The first day of the sixth month in Hebrew calendar in 520 BC. The second after one month the third and the fourth after one month. He felt very much for the delay of the Temple construction. He commented that people were living comfortably in their wooden houses, but neglected the House of God which was ruined beyond recognition. Haggai finally said God commanded the nation to ascend the Temple mount to bring in cedar timbers and to resume the suspended construction of His House. As a result "I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified saith the Lord" (Haggai 1:8).

Zechariah was a priest as well as a prophet. He was the son of Berachiah and grandson of Iddo. After sometime he became the chief priest to Iddo's clan. He was also born in Babylonian captivity like Haggai. The meaning of his name was "the Lord remembers." It is a wonderful testimony to the nation that God would never forget His people. He brought them back to rebuild His Temple. He started his prophetic ministry in the eighth month of the Hebrews in 520 BC. It was just after two months of the commencement of his fellow prophet Haggai and Just after one month the construction of the Temple was renewed. These two prophets prophesied together in Jerusalem.

Though the construction was started again, they worked with lurking fear that massive massacre might take place at any moment. But the Lord's encouragement to Zerubbabel and Joshua was there. "I am with you saith the Lord" (Haggai 1-13). They should have faith in such a situation that God would provide them anything and everything. Anyway the work was commenced with the inspiring words of God only three and a half weeks after the prophetic message of Haggai.

They continued the work with the hope their success was assured by the Lord. He said, "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies, my house shall be built in it." The construction of the Temple would be accomplished by the

power of God. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit saith the Lord of hosts.” (Zechariah 4:6) when the construction work was in full swing the news of the progress reached the regional governor Tatnai suddenly, because such construction generally required prior approval. Tatnai did not know anything about that issue. So, he paid an official visit to Jerusalem, in order to get the first hand information. The Jewish leaders told him that the Persian king Cyrus the great gave a proclamation regarding the Temple construction, but it could not be completed due to some reason and at that time Darius 1 the great was the king of Persia and that matter was referred to him. Then a thorough search was made in the offices for the decree of the king Cyrus and it was found with that scroll king Darius confirmed the claims of the Jewish leaders.

Darius also endorsed the decree of king Cyrus and gave his order for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple with full speed and added that funds would be sanctioned from the tribute money. Darius warned the regional authorities through another decree. “Let the work of this House of God, alone, let the governor of Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in His place (EZRA 6:7). He explained in detail if anybody apposed the construction they would be slain and their property destroyed. The decrees of both Cyrus the great and Darius the great gave strong support to the building of God’s Temple and carried the highest international authority in the ancient world. Both of them thought and confirmed Jerusalem and the Temple mount would be an unattainable and unalterable possessions of the Jewish people and they should not be transferred to any foreigner that settled around their nation Israel.

Finally the construction of the Temple was over in 516 BC. This happy result was four years after the construction renewed, twenty one years after the foundation laid and 91 years after the first Temple was destroyed. Since we call the Temple as King Solomon’s Temple, we can call the second one as Zerubbabel’s Temple because under his guidance only that could be done. This rebuilt Temple was dedicated with many sacrifices and in great joy. Then the duties of the priests were regularized. In the first month of Hebrew calendar called “Nisan” (that comes in March-April in our calendar), the Jewish people observed their most important festival called the “Passover” on 14th, then the feast of unleavened bread on 15th of the same month in that rebuilt Temple for the first time.

We have to remember two significant points in this context. The first point is God’s Temple was rebuilt only in Jerusalem, but not in Babylon or in Persian capital. It so happened by the command of God (EZRA 1:2). Even though

the Temple site remained barren for decades God did not forsake the mount Zion because it is eternal and divinely chosen place. God's house could never be built at any place except in that location. The second point is that God's Temple was rebuilt with lesser glory. It was built on the same old location. On the same foundations and with the same local material like limestone and with the cedar timbers from Lebanon. Yet, it was not looked as beautiful as the first Temple. It might be due to short time and limited funds.

But Haggai, encouraged people not to be discouraged for the present Temple's lesser glory. He prophesised that the beauty and glory of the first Temple over shadowed the second Temple, but the future glory of the Messianic Temple would eclipse the glory of the first Temple. That is to say, the glory of the Messianic Temple would be incomparable and unsurpassed prophet Haggai, revealed some more details about the future Messianic Temple. He said it would be preceded by God's terrible catastrophic shaking of the whole universe (Haggai 2:6-7; Isaiah 13:13, 34:4, revelation 16:18-20). Then comes Messiah who is wanted by all nations. As soon as he comes He will destroy the enemy and establish His Messianic kingdom and build His Temple on the mount Zion and make it the most glorious with unbelievable quantity of gold and silver. And from this most glorious House in Jerusalem the Lord will bring the universal peace and harmony of His Messianic kingdom(Haggai 2:7-9).

JESUS THE REDEEMER OF THE EARTH



Among the books in the Bible the “Book of Revelation” is placed as the last one. There are two specific reasons for keeping it as the last one in the inspired canon of the scripture –

1. It was written by Apostle John in the year 95 AD about 65 years after the death of Jesus Christ. So this date made to add that as the last book and the other books were written at least 25 years earlier than this Revelation.
2. The second reason is more important because it gave full details of return of the son of God at the end of the age. Therefore these two reasons the date of writing and the prophetic events in the book made the canonical authorities to keep this book of Revelation at the end.

The Holy Bible comprises of 66 books and among them this one is unique because of the contents. It revealed everything about Christ. It is directly given by the son of God Himself. Jesus Christ is the real source of the book and the object. Therefore no other book in the Bible can claim about Jesus as far as the authentic information is concerned. It might be the desire of heavenly father that His son should give Himself to humanity the account of His ultimate victory at the end of the age. So the book of Revelation is concerned to the last days of history and its main source is the son of God whose major work only to redeem the planet earth at the end of the age. At every stage of history this book reminds us as a disciplined and magnificent sentinel informing men that at the end truth will defeat error light will defeat darkness, life will defeat death, Christ will defeat antichrist and God will defeat Satan. The important understanding of this book is dramatically heightened when we approach it. This book appears to be the final end of the age. The prominent and incomparable event of history is the second coming of the Lord Jesus.’

This is really a sensational news when the trumpets of Revelation are blown and the bowls poured out the impact. It will be like a worldwide tsunami a hundred thousand fold more powerful than anything humankind has ever

experienced. And the outcome of such dreadful experience will be far greater than mortal minds can comprehend. In such conditions it is no wonder if men tried to hide themselves in dens and caves and cry out for the rocks to fall and hide them from the wrath of the lamb. (Revelation 6:15-16). In such a position the reality is God's judgment, the cosmos will be for good, then purging of the earth has defiled it since the fall of Adam and Eve. It has become an essential part of the process leading to the regeneration (rebirth) of all things. The purpose of the coming of the son of God is not to turn the world upside down but to turn it right side up. Tragically the book of Revelation has been fictionalized and distorted by the world. It is made little important and no relevance to life. To tell the truth it is more ignored and less understood by the believers. The book of revelation by its own testimony unveiled events surrounding the son of God at the end of the age. Along with birth death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ there is no other important subject in this book. Yet it is really paradoxical as it became a closed book to majority of Christian community.

For some people this book is deep dark and heavy. It is also associated with horror which causes some Christians even not to open it and read freely. But the truth is those who rejected the grace of God in Christ the events mentioned in the book would be their worst nightmare and the people of such nature can never find pleasure in reality. To the true believers it is a different story. There is no doubt some people would have severe persecution by the antichrist and some believers become martyrs. For these believers God will provide a special crown. Some people might have adverse impression about the book of revelation though it is giving us full details of the king of glory at His second coming in conflict with the powers of darkness and coming away from the conflict with the greatest of all victories.

When Jesus comes again He will resurrect those who died in Him and also rapture the living Christians but the believer does not want such things to happen when Jesus comes again He will defeat Satan, the antichrist and the false prophets but the believer does not want. When Jesus comes again He will defeat false religions but the believer does not want it. When Jesus comes for the second time He will defeat the corrupt government but the believer does not like it. When the son of God comes again He will redeem the earth from the curse of sin but the believer does not want it. When Jesus comes again He will make all things new but the believer does not want it. And finally when Jesus comes for the second time He will establish a glorious kingdom on the planet earth. Unfortunately the believer does not want this also.

If we look into the Bible carefully there is no other book better than the book of Revelation as it is giving greater reason for rejoicing and praising of God. In fact this is the book of king's ultimate glorious victory and we as true believers are the sons and daughters of that king. So the book of revelation is not to be afraid of but to read with devotion and try to understand it correctly. Anyway let us not worry about the impressions of different people but let us try to understand the wonderful events depicted by Apostle John who was also called "Beloved disciple" by Jesus Christ. In the fourth chapter of this book we come across a most spectacular scene which no other person from the Bible would have witnessed. The writer John got a vision and he described the vision in his wonderful book what he has seen from the open door of heaven. He heard some voice like a trumpet calling him through the open door. Then what he has seen in heaven provides us the clue for things which are going to happen on the earth. He has seen the stage for ultimate deliverance of believers through resurrection or rapture.

John has seen some gathering together and immediately followed by the out pouring of God's wrath during the "Day of the Lord." Again it was followed by the ushering of glorious messianic age upon the earth. Then John saw God the father seated upon His throne which looked with the colors of Jasper (translucent white) and sardine (blood red). These two colors were emanating from the throne and the throne was encircled with emerald rainbow and then followed a sea of glass which looked like Noahic flood. God set His rainbow as a reminder as He would never again destroy the world with flood. At the same time God revealed the world would be judged by fire in the last days and that judgment has to be started soon. John also saw the 24 elders seated on throne around the central throne on which God Almighty was sitting. They were with white raiment's and gold crown on their heads. Their true identity was discussed for a longtime but concluded with different opinions. Some commentators identified them as human and representatives of raptured church in heaven. Some suggested they were the representatives of the 24 courses of the Old Testament priesthood. The third group suggested as 12 of them were the 12 tribes of Israel and the other 12 were the New Testament apostles but the most widely accepted opinion was that the 24 elders were it seems no other than in high order of the angelic beings and this opinion appears to be more authentic than the other three.

Lightening and thunder appeared from the throne which suggested the throne is judicial in nature. The religions made through Jesus would be delivered

and those who rejected Christ have to be judged. Then John saw seven spirits before the throne of God who were the representatives of the Holy Spirit. God knows everything and nothing can be hidden from Him because all men one day must give an account. Next John's attention was drawn towards four living creatures who appeared to have enveloped the four sights of the throne of God. Each creature seemed to have six wings and full of eyes and they resembled the Seraphin angels which prophet Isaiah described (Isaiah 6: 1-3) and also Ezekiel's description of the cherubim (Ezekiel 1:4-14) these four creatures were no other than a high order of angelic beings. They were the servants of God and their primary duty was concerned to the holiness of God. By remaining around the throne they would be singing always in praise of God as "Holy Holy Holy Lord God Almighty". (Revelation 4:8).

By proclaiming Holy Holy Holy these four living creatures were calling to the infinite holiness of one who was sitting on the throne. As the fourth chapter comes to an end these four living creature and 24 elders as John saw fell down before the Lord God and proclaimed "Thou art worthy O Lord to receive glory honor and power for thou has created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). The 24 elders and the four living creatures in their word of praise remind us the world was created for Himself. God is the center of all things. As we know the earth moves around the sun but not the sun moves around the earth. In the same way God created man to glorify Him but not God is a jolly benevolent (santaclause) for man. Apostle Paul writing to the church at Rome said "For of him through him and to him are all things to whom to be glory forever." (Romans 11:36). All things are of Him – He is the creator – all things are through Him – he is the designer and the sustainer. All things are to Him – He is the consummator – all things have their origin movement and completion in Him.

So the outcome of fourth chapter of revelation is God the father created all things and the result of His creation to ascribe to Him glory, honor and power. As the creator He deserves all from His creation. The most wonderful seen John witnessed in heaven in the fourth chapter overflowed into the fifth chapter. And in this chapter we find a scroll in the right hand of God the father who created all things. Then John wrote the following lines "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written and on the backside sealed with "Seven seals." (Revelation 5:1). John saw in his vision a scroll written inside and back. In those days many scrolls were made of animal skins which could be cleaned and smoothed on one side. They sometimes sewing together

as a writing surface. The length of those skins was sometimes 18 inches from top to bottom. Those scrolls were made in different lengths depending on how many skins had to be put together. It is said the anti-lope skins were more popular in those days. So they were made clean on both sides and used for writing what the Bible calls the inside and the back. The scroll of the right hand of God was the symbolic of the place of His power. Unfortunately most of the people could not read or write during Biblical times. The seal was generally comprised of a piece of twine wrapped round the scroll and then secured to the scroll at one point with hot wax. While the wax was still hot it imprinted with a signet ring or written message to protect and secure the contents and to guarantee the integrity of the writing.

Sometimes a soft clay that could be quickly hardened was used for the seal. The seal with an imprint or writing on it would not be broken and then recalled without detection. It was no doubt a simple but effective way of keeping the contents of the documents in those days. Even in the roman empire military messages, wills and land or slaves ownership records were often contained in sealed scrolls. John reminded us how the scroll was sealed with seven seals. The number seven is the Biblical reference for completion and perfection. In the book of Revelation the number seven is used more than 50 times because the book brings some historical facts. The book speaks of seven lampstands, seven spirits, seven seals, seven bowls, seven trumpets, seven angels, seven thunders, etc. only a few examples are mentioned here. It is really unusual to find a scroll with seven seals. The Jerusalem museum which housed the famous and controversial “Dead Sea Scrolls” also had an excellent exhibit of ancient scrolls. Among such hundreds of scrolls in the museum one a Samaritan scroll was found with seven seals dated about 200 BC.

The seals trumpets and bowls in the book do not run concurrently (side by side) but they run consecutively (one after another). John continued to say what he has seen in his vision. “And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice who is worthy to open the book and loose the seals thereof.” And no man in heaven nor in the earth nor under the earth was able to open the scroll by breaking the seven seals. The most important in this context is searching for a worthy “Man”. Now Apostle John described briefly the account of seven seals – as he said the first seal of the scroll indicates a white horse and its rider is “False Christ”. The second seal depicts the red horse and the rider of war. The third seal represents black horse and the rider tells about famine. The fourth seal speaks about a pale horse and the rider points out disease which finally

leads to death. The fifth seals depicts martyrs who have been slain because of their loyalty to Jesus Christ and to His world. It is this seal at the midpoint of Daniel's 70th week (Daniel 9:27) which triggers great tribulation. The sixth seal suggest cosmic disturbance which indicates something will happen to the sun, moon and stars. This seal is also tells about the "Day of the Lord" that is about to commence. It is the same seal which will cut short the great tribulation contrary to popular opinion nowhere in the Bible. It is ever taught the great tribulation is three and half years in duration. The seventh seal tells about seven trumpet judgments that the seventh seal contained.

Any man who wants to call himself worthy to open the seal must possess authority and power to break all seven seals and have control over the events which each seal depicts. So searching for such a man became a universal in scope but this also became a failure as no man was found worthy. As John did not find a worthy man to open the seal he began to weep in his vision but one of the elders consoled him and said the lion of the tribe of Judah the root of David would be able to loose the seven seals and open the book. John understood the scroll was written on both sides and sealed with seven seals. It was kept on the right hand side of God Almighty. It was no other than the title deed of the planet earth. If the scroll could not be opened the purging and regeneration of the earth from the defilement of sin through the trumpet and bowl judgment might not occur. If the scroll could not be opened righteousness and justice lie mortally wounded never to rise again. If the scroll could not be opened all of Johns fellow apostles who had been by now martyred for their faith would become vain or lie in vain. If the scroll could not be opened Abraham's search for a city which had foundations, whose builders and maker is God Himself (Hebrew 4:10) was a vain search. If the scroll could not be opened men are not "Pilgrims to progress", to a better land. If the scroll could not be opened Christ cannot return. If the scroll could not be opened the day when wolf will dwell with the lamb that we cannot see and also when the earth opens her full bounty with the weapons of war-fare will be made into the weapons of farming and every man will sit under his own fig tree satisfied and fulfilled will never come to function. If the scroll could not be opened God is not a covenant keeping God and Satan will win when Christ looses and man will die in his sins.

It is really wonderful as the New Testament opens with a proclamation of the book of generation of Jesus Christ son of David and son of Abraham. Apostle John continued to look at the throne of God and described the situation

in the following manner. When Jesus had taken the book (scroll) the four beasts and 24 elders fell down before the lamb. Everyone of them was harping and the golden vials full of odors were prayers of saints. They began to sing a new song with the following words. “Thou art worthy to take the book and open the seal thereof.” He was slain but redeemed us to God by His blood with all the sacrifice He would bring authority to man to rule the earth. As a result of lamb’s actions false religions will be judged and wicked men put to death. Antichrist will be destroyed and Satan vanquished. Death will be defeated and curse lifted. The earth will be made a new righteousness and justice becomes a reality on the earth. The most significant event in this context is Jesus Christ’s taking of the scroll from His father, God and bring that title deed to the planet earth. Then He will go to war to redeem the planet earth from Satan who usurped the man’s position. So the church prays to God our father which art in heaven – Mathew 6 chapter.

This has been a regular prayer in the church for 2000 year and the same prayer Jesus taught to His disciples. Finally this has become almost a pattern prayer to every Christian. With all this the only hope for this planet is the kingly relief from the son of God. So people continued to pray “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” The son of God took the title deed from His Father to bring to the earth. Then those four living creatures and 24 elders began to sing a song which they never sang before. They sang this wonderful song because Jesus had taken the scroll and about to break it. This particular song was called the song of the “Kinsman’s redeemer.” This redeemer was called in ancient Israel as “Go’el” which means literally “Coming to the help or rescue of another”. The responsibility of “Go’el” is beautifully depicted in the book of “Ruth”. All the Bible readers know the story of Elimelech and his wife Naomi they lived in a small village at that time called Bethlehem. Bethlehem means “House of bread” and Jerusalem means “House of peace” but today Bethlehem is under the control of Palestine government. Though Bethlehem was called the house of bread there was no bread at that time as God cursed the land and so Naomi with her husband and two sons had to go to a strange heathen land called Moab in search of food. In course of time their two sons married Moabite heathen women but Gods curse was upon them still and Naomi lost her husband and her two sons. In the meantime Naomi came to know God blessed her land. So she wanted to return to her homeland Bethlehem with her second daughter-in-law Ruth who wished to follow Naomi to this land. Ruth while coming with her mother-in-law said she would leave her own people and go with her. She would like to live with her only. She added Naomi’s

God would be her God and Naomi's people her people. She finally said only death would separate them. What a wonderful statement Ruth gave? But there is truth in it. It appears even the angels in heaven rejoiced exceedingly at the wonderful statement of that gentile woman Ruth. These heroic words of Ruth became a talk among men for many centuries. The book of Ruth has only four chapter and 85 verses. Yet her story became very popular among the Bible readers.

Naomi was in desperate condition as she lost her husband and her two sons without grand children to keep the family lineage. She lost all hope of her future also. But God gave Israel the law of Go'el or kinsman redeemer to avoid such catastrophic situation. When Ruth said "Your God is my God" it is not an ordinary statement. Ruth finally married a Jewish man by name Boaz a distant relative to Naomi. Boaz was born to Salmon and Rachab (or Rahab) a gentile harlot in Jericho who helped three spies. That must be the reason for Boaz to have a tender heart towards Ruth who was also a gentile woman like his mother. In this context it is reasonable to assume that Ruth must have some knowledge of the law of Goel. So when Naomi, a Jewish woman said "She lost all hopes" Ruth, a gentile woman, replied "There is still hope." Actually the law of Goel would reveal three things

1. The redeemer must be a kinsman.
2. He must have the redemption price.
3. He must be willing to redeem even if his own family inheritance was marred in the process.

As a matter of fact, it was the law of Goel or kinsman redeemer that the Sadducees used in trying to entrap and discredit Jesus in the New Testament. They did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus also. The central point for the entire discussion between the Lord and Sadducees was based on the Old Testament law of Goel. Boaz liked Ruth very much. Everything went their favor and finally they married. In a short time they got a son also by name "Obed". This Obed begat Jessie and Jessie begat king David. It means Boaz and gentile woman Ruth were the great grand parents to king David. Above all because of Ruth's faith and Boaz's godliness who wished to be a kinsman redeemer became the royal lineage of Jesus Christ. As we see in Revelation 5th chapter a search was made for a man worthy to break open the seal of the scroll that contained the title deed of the earth. The strong angel also looked for a man who was a kinsman who had the redemption price and who was willing to redeem. God

created man to be the king on earth but he lost that right when he surrendered himself to Satan in the Garden of Eden. And now the major issue is whether there is any man to recapture the lost destiny of man as king of the earth. As a result Jesus became that man to mans kinsman redeemer. He is of bonelike our bone and of flesh like our flesh. Apostle Paul said in this connection that Jesus Christ redeemed us with His precious blood as a lamb without blemish and without spot or remark.

Jesus wanted to redeem us willingly and whole heartedly. So He said of Himself "The son of man came not to be ministered but to minister and to give His life as a ransom for many people rather for all sinners." The four living creatures and the 24 elders are now singing a different song. They are singing for the redemption of the church and for the bride of Christ. However, the authorized version at this point is misleading. The later part of verse 9 is translated as for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred tongue people and nation. According to authorized translation the four living creatures and 24 elders are speaking of themselves by using the pronoun "Us" but this pronoun us seemed to have been translated in "New International Version" as "Men". Therefore this portion of verses must be said for thou art slain and hast redeemed (men) to God by thy blood out of every kindred tongue people and nation. All were singing the song. It is the church called royal priesthood. It is the church that shall reign on the earth. It is because of the work of the kinsman redeemer. Jesus Christ the Goel the one who has come to help and rescue all people who believed Him. Apostle John again heard the singing in his vision. At this time the song was sung by not only the four beasts and 24 elders but also ten thousand times of ten thousands and thousands and thousands of angels all shouted in one voice as the slain lamb was worthy to receive the power riches wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing. With this the four beasts said "Amen" and the 24 elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth forever and ever.

Then Jesus Christ takes the scroll and the title deed to the planet earth and brakes its seals the trumpet blows judgment and this would follow and depict the kinsman redeemer at work. According to His plan He is driving away false religion, corrupt government, wicked men, the antichrist, the false prophet and the Satan from the planet earth. Then He would purge the planet earth, the ravage of sin in order to make it New. Jesus wants the planet a perfect one and a redeemed one for the redeemed people Amen.

WALKING WITH CHRIST

“For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7)

The cosmos created by God is infinite though the scientists with all their intelligence tried to measure it for the purpose of acquiring knowledge. They felt it highly impossible. They came to a conclusion that it is immeasurable the more they thought of its boundaries the more it has become boundless. The more they tried to comprehend, it, they realized, it has become incomprehensible. As we all know some years ago rockets were sent into the space; with their help also with the help of Astronomical Telescope, the scientists were able to acquire enormous knowledge of heavenly bodies especially regarding terrestrial heaven. They never thought of this wonderful achievement and getting of valuable information prior to these experiments.

But this new knowledge posed a threat and caused more questions, which have become unanswerable. Yet scientists are able to know many secret things from the creation of God. It is really God's gift to them. The truth is “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7). Man does not find this truth either in the distant stars of the Milky Way galaxy or in another planet. As we all know God created animal world on earth. Then with His own hands, He shaped man on this earth with dust and then breathed into his nostrils breath of life and thereby became a living soul. It is on this same earth, God gave man a dominion and authority to rule over as king. It is on this earth, God wished to keep His name and His glory.

For all the wonderful things of God's creation even the angels from heaven seemed to have some lurking desire to have a glance of this terrestrial ball because God wished to work among the fallen men and implement His redemption plan. So, if we consider earth as an important one in the Milky Way galaxy then we must consider Israel as an important place on this earth. And to this planet the son of God would like to come and establish His kingdom. He wanted to walk on this land only. Therefore, the main point is, if we want to walk with Jesus in every point of view, we must walk in the land of Israel, as Jesus walked in order to sanctify ourselves.

Now, let us have a brief look at Bethlehem, the birth place of David and his genealogy and the background of Jesus Christ in that place. Bethlehem was a small village where David was born and also Jesus was the lineage of David of the same place. Just at the time of the birth of Jesus, God used “Augustus

Caesar” the Roman Emperor at that time, who was also supposed to look into the affairs of the state, proclaimed a decree stating that all people must go to their respective ancestral native places, for the purpose of census. At that time Joseph and Miriam (Mary) parents of Jesus were residing in Nazareth and Mary was in her days of delivery. Both of them were the descendents of David and they had to come to Bethlehem for the purpose of census and the distance between the two places is about 72 miles. Anyway they took 7 days to reach Bethlehem on a donkey. As the village was fully crowded with the people who came for census, found only a cave like place for their shelter at the back of an inn. According to historical information there were three caves in a row at the back of that inn.

One cave was occupied by Joseph and Mary for the purpose of her delivery at any movement. The second one was named after saint Jeremo, who translated the Bible into Latin language and the third cave was named after about two hundred baby boys who were mercilessly butchered by king Herod, in connection with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Those boys were just two years old and even less. With the delivery of Mary, God visited this planet and Bethlehem village which remained obscure for many centuries now became world famous because of the birth of Jesus in that village of Bethlehem, just five miles away from Jerusalem. To the North of Bethlehem there are two most important Biblical cities, namely Hebron and Beersheba at that time. The route was popularly known as the patriarchal high way.

Why it is called so because Abraham, Isaac and Jacob travelled on that way. The rain water would flow down to the West of Bethlehem and go into the Mediterranean Sea. And the rain water fall at the eastern side of Bethlehem would finally go into the “Dead Sea.” Geographically, Bethlehem is located within the boundaries of the two tribes called Judean. The two tribes of Judah and Benjamin were called Jews who were originally separated from the twelve tribes of Jacob and formed their own state as the Southern kingdom of Judah with Jerusalem as their capital after the death of King Solomon.

According to Biblical history only these two tribes remained loyal to “Yehweh” the God of their forefathers, even after they were separated. The separation of ten tribes as the Northern kingdom of Israel and with two tribes as the Southern Kingdom of Judah took place in 922 BC because of the sins committed by king Solomon. But the Israelites forgot their Yehweh completely. They mixed and mingled with the surrounding heathens and finally lost their identification in the society.

The word Bethlehem is derived from two Hebrew words “Beth” and “Lehem” which means “House of bread.” The land around Bethlehem was a farm land. The people of the surrounding places would bring their erop to Bethlehem for transaction. So, it was also called farmers market. As men had done their business with crops, women did their grocery shopping in that village. That must be the reason why it is called the house of bread.

It was in these hills around Bethlehem the gallant and Godly Boaz commanded his workers to go beyond the rules of law and allow Moabites woman “Ruth” to glean in the fields to pick up that which reapers had left behind them Boaz commanded that “handfuls be deliberately left behind to provide for Ruth and Noamie”(Ruth 2:15-17) we have this wonderful story of Ruth in the Bible with only four chapters and 85 verses. Where in we see how this heathen woman had abundant faith in our God and finally became the legal wife of Boaz.

It was from that Bethlehem the house of bread produced, the son of God, who was also called “the bread of life.” It was from that village Jesus came into this world to satisfy one and all who wished to take part in His faithful life. Nazareth was also a small village at that time. This village lies in between the Sea of Galilee on the Eastern side and Mediterranean Sea, on the western side. This Nazareth is located about 1230 feet above the sea level in the hilly region of lower Galilee. It is on the major trade centre from Egypt in the South, to Syria in the North West and beyond. Added to that the popular mountains which have Biblical importance like Mount Carmel Mount Tabor and Mount Gilbou encompass Nazareth.

There is a valley in a short distance which was called by “Napoleon Bonaparte” as the best natural battlefield in the world. And that place is called “Armageddon” in the Bible in the book of Revelation. God must have planned this place for the future battle that would take place between God Himself and the Antichrist. The result must be God would crush those heathens in that battle, and establish His kingdom. The Lord commanded about Nathaniel, “Behold and Israelite in deed in whom is no guile”(John 1:47). And Nathaniel, one of the disciples of Jesus enquired “can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”(John 1:46).

There is Biblical prophecy about this Armageddon that some memorable events would take place in that ground at the end of the time through battle, then as described there was no good reputation for Nazareth; during the first

century still Jesus spent His early days by helping His foster father, in the carpentry work. It is also said Jesus did some miracles even as a boy.

Jesus started His preaching and His first sermon was in Nazareth in a synagogue on a Sabbath day to Jewish people. With that He tried to identify Himself that He was the son of God sent by Him to preach the Word of God to the poor and to heal the sick of all kinds of diseases. It was the acceptable year of the Lord, Jesus wanted to preach. This acceptable year is a reference to the Jewish jubilee year, which would come once in every fifty years. It was extended according to Jewish law, that it would remind them the time of deliverance and setting free of all captives and waiving out of all debts of the people. The fiftieth day can also be remembered for one more thing that is God sent the Holy Spirit on the fiftieth day to His disciples who were gathered in the upper house.

Jesus wanted to heal those who were sick spiritually and lagging behind. He was the promised Messiah to Jews, but he was not accepted by them. He was also what people had in their minds. So he said unto them, “ye will surely say unto me this proverb - physician heal thyself.” Perhaps they might want to say, “take care of yourself, don’t worry about us we can take care of ourselves and our own needs” and finally Jesus understood that the people of Nazareth bluntly rejected Him and His preaching. He felt very sad as He could not command respect from His own people. As it is mentioned in the Bible, He left that place, once and for all and never returned to Nazareth again.

It is really more tragic and unfortunate such a great physician, who could heal any kind of disease just with a word from His mouth, was not cared for their foolishness and pride must have prompted them to reject such a great physician who was sent by God. They did not realize the fact that pride is the greatest sin and leads one to his own down fall. In their own ego, they must have thought individually “I am the captain of my ship, I don’t need any body’s help (physician). Having understood the mental set up of His own people, Jesus, with firm decision, left that place and went to Galilee, where He selected some disciples who were fishermen in the sea of Galilee. This Galilee lay between Golan Heights and Galilean mountain ranges.

Like Jerusalem and Bethlehem the city of Galilee had also some Biblical importance because Jesus spent some time now and then around Galilee with His disciples. This must be the reason for He was also called Galilean.

The length of the sea of Galilee is thirteen miles and the width seven and a half miles. And the circumference is about thirty two miles. It is situated in a valley, almost seven hundred feet below the sea level and two hundred feet deep. A famous historian Josephus called the sea of Galilee as “the Ambition of Nature.” Another Rabbie called her Jehovah had created seven seas, but the sea of Galilee is His delight. The people of Galilee are so fond of that sea and called her with the following names.

- 1) Chinnerth or chinneroth (Numbers 34:11) Joshua 12:3.
- 2) Gennes aret (Luke 5:1).
- 3) Kennert.
- 4) Sea of Teberias (John 6:1, 21:1)
- 5) The Sea of Galilee (Matthew 4:18, Mark 1:16)

Jesus happened to perform some miracles in the waters of the Sea of Galilee and around the city. They are :

- 1) Jesus helped the disciples from the drought of fish.
- 2) He controlled the storm of wind and waves on the sea.
- 3) Jesus walked on the waters of the sea of Galilee, which surprised everybody, and Peter also tried to walk but he could not as he had no faith on himself.
- 4) Jesus healed the demoniac and the swine plunged to death.
- 5) He promised His disciples after His resurrection.

The city of Tiberius is on the western side of the Sea shore. It is called so because the Roman authorities built it for themselves. It was named after Tiberias Caesar who was Roman Emperor at that time. But it is not mentioned in any gospel whether Jesus had visited that city any time or on any occasion. Some commentators were of the opinion that Jesus might not have shown any interest towards that city because the Roman authorities were persecuting Jews and Christians at that time.

Geographically the city of Tiberius was built by the Romans, there on one reason. That area became famous for natural hot springs and they liked the hot springs. So they made hot bath houses in that place. Many people believed that those hot springs had the great therapeutic value and this blind belief still in existence in that area. So, the result of that blind belief made many infirmed people from long distances go to that place and take bath in that hot health giving waters. But after Jesus came, people understood Him. He had divine healing power they stopped going to that hot springs and turned towards Jesus

Christ for their healing of any disease and many more people who became sick of sin came to Jesus for the healing of their souls.

At a little distance towards North there was a small village called “Magdala” and today it is called “Migdal.” It is said Mary Magdalene one of the disciples of Jesus came from that village. And if we go still further, we can see the plains of Genneseret. It was a traditional site where Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish. Next the village of Capernaum is located on the North west coast of the sea of Galilee and in this village the Lord Jesus Christ made His head quarters after He left Nazareth. It is two and half miles from where the Jordan river enters the sea of Galilee. Capernaum is also called God’s own town. It is situated along the trade route from Damascus to Mediterranean coast and Egypt. It is said that tolls were collected by the Roman Government and in the same place Jesus called Matthew one of His disciples. During the time of Jesus Capernaum was a great military centre for Romans and the population at that time was 10,000 only. This place is famous for two things.

1. There is one orthodox Chapel and
2. The house of St. Peter was also there.

In Capernaum Jesus did some miracles. They are :

- 1) Jesus asked St. Peter to pay to tribute money from the mouth of a fish.
- 2) Jesus healed the centurion’s servant.
- 3) St. Peter’s mother-in-law was healed.
- 4) A great number of sick were brought to Jesus for healing.
- 5) A woman with an issue of blood was healed here.
- 6) Two blind men were healed.
- 7) Jesus raised the ruler’s daughter.
- 8) Capernaum failed to repent so it remained under Christ’s Judgement.
- 9) Noble man’s son was healed.
- 10) Jesus had His discourse regarding “the bread of life.”
- 11) The Synagogue of Capernaum was built by a Roman Centurion.

Then Jesus moved into the city of gold called Jerusalem. It reminds us the patriarch Abraham, when Lot, his nephew was taken as captive from Sodom by invading the neighbouring army he came to know that and rescued his nephew from that calamity. While returning home, Abraham met Melchizedec who was called king of Salem (Genesis 14:18) who remained there as the high priest of the Most High God (El EL yon).

As a priest he served bread and wine to Abraham and in return Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedec from his income. So, as per the Biblical history giving tithes to God started with Abraham. Melchizedec built the city of Salem, which later became Jerusalem which means “the house of peace.”

Melchizedec maintained the sanctity of Jerusalem as the first high priest and it was continued by the second high priest Jesus Christ who came after about two thousand years. He was called the second high priest in the Bible after the order of Melchizedec the king of righteousness and Jesus will rule Jerusalem, one day after His second coming and establish His kingdom.

Apart from Salem and Jebus, Jerusalem has some other names like, house of peace, Holy City, city of David, city of God, mountain of the Lord, etc... There are some extraordinary things regarding Jerusalem. They are :

- 1) It is called the nerve centre of the whole world geographically.
- 2) It is called the salvation centre of the world spiritually.
- 3) It is called the story centre of the world prophetically.
- 4) It is called the glory centre of the world ultimately.
- 5) If we keep the beauty created by God in the whole world, in 10 parts, we can find 9 parts of that beauty in Jerusalem alone.
- 6) If we think about the knowledge of the world given to human kind in 10 parts, we can find 9 parts of that knowledge in Jerusalem alone.
- 7) At that same time, if we put the suffering of the world in 10 parts, we can see 9 parts of that suffering in the faces of Jews in Jerusalem.
- 8) Jerusalem is the Holiest place to Jews, Christians, and Muslims after Mecca and Medina.
- 9) The name Jerusalem is used about 600 times in the Old Testament alone.

This Jerusalem according to Biblical history had experienced many wars and destined to “Divine Design” to become the city of peace, to be ruled over by the king of righteousness like Melchizedec and after him the Messiah the king of Jews and Jesus Christ will rule it only with new establishment and the world peace can be achieved.

No body in the world can change the Jewish people from their land because they were God chosen people and it was a Promised Land given to their patriarch Abraham and to his descendants Israelites. Abraham wished to sacrifice his son Isaac on Moria Mountains, as he was asked by God to do so in order to test his faith. King David captured this Jerusalem through war with

warlike people Jebusites and made it as his capital. Then his son Solomon built a permanent house (Temple) to God in Jerusalem. In three different times the king of Babylon came and destroyed the city and the Holy Temple. Then he took away not only the gold and silver from the temple, but also many people as captives.

From that foreign land (Babylon) some of the devoted Jews prayed to God. They said in absolute depression. "If we forget thee O Jerusalem, let our right hands forget their cunningness." After about 70 years some devotees like Zerubbabel returned to Jerusalem and tried to rebuild the temple on the same foundations. The Temple was renovated again in spite of many changes and attacks on Jerusalem and the Temple, the curse on the Jews did not end. There is still some prophecy that when the Antichrist comes he too will desecrate the Temple by keeping his image. Finally there will be millennial Temple at Jerusalem with the second coming of Jesus Christ.

For about four hundred thirty long years, Israelites were in bondage in Egypt and finally came to their Promised Land under the leadership of prophet Moses and Joshua. Then in 721 BC the ten tribes of Northern Kingdom called Israelites were captured and taken as captives by the Assyrian. Then in 536 BC the remnant of both Assyrian and Babylonian captives returned to Jerusalem. Again within a short period the Romans attacked Jerusalem and the Temple and there was a total destruction of both. This attack forced many Jews to leave their country and scatter into many nations of the world.

And finally in nineteen forty eight almost after nineteen hundred years out of the ashes of Holocaust. God once again called His chosen people from different parts of the world to come back to their home land. Some of them could respond to the call of God, but they had to fight again six day war to recapture the holy land city Jerusalem in 1967.

Apart from outside problems Jerusalem had its own internal troubles, because the city was divided into four parts as, Jews quarters, Muslim quarters, Christian quarters and Armenian quarters. Actually there was no internal peace in the city of peace and added to that the people became restless with outside terrorism. The internal conflict most probably between the Jews and Muslims regarding the ownership of mount Moria where Abraham planned to sacrifice his son. This struggle finally turned to be spiritual one which could not be solved so far successfully. The Jews are anticipating that only the return of the

Messiah would solve the problem when he comes. The media also misled the public like a lamb is led to the slaughter house. And also some pressure from the neighbouring nations for their political ends made this nation restless.

Really speaking the son of God loved the city of peace very much. He felt agony even cried by prophesising from the Mount of Olives that Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed in future. Jesus said these words and died in 30 AD. The Temple and the city destroyed in 70 AD. Biblical history says that the Roman authorities had taken to Rome even the Menorah which was made of solid gold. Jesus wished to draw the attention of every body particularly the citizens of Jerusalem toward Himself. Then He wanted to rule over them as Messiah, but the Jewish people had no faith in Him that He was the Messiah.

Jesus tried His best to change the stone heated and ungrateful Israel but in vain. So, He said He would never think of them unless they say “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:29). Finally Jesus Christ sacrificed his life for the sake of the whole world outside walls of the city of peace. He came to this world only to die. He climbed on to the cross by keeping all sins, of the world on his shoulders near the place of crucifixion there is one most beautiful garden, which was once a grape garden as history says. It has become a favourite place to the believers of the world today and we can see stone cut empty tomb. God of heaven was fully satisfied with His son’s crucifixion for the sins of humanity His death, and His resurrection on the third day from the grave.

Jesus asked all the believers to take up the cross and follow him one day. Why He said so because He wanted to make them understand, how difficult it would be to carry the cross on their shoulders. Perhaps He wanted to separate the true believers who should say “this is the cross I must bear.” So, that this act would remind the people the purpose of His death burial and resurrection. Now a days men are walking in all the places of Israel where Jesus walked and feeling themselves sanctified.

People can follow Jesus Christ often visited spots on the Mount of Olives or stand where Jesus stood outside the tomb of Lazarus or walk in via-dolorosa (the way of sorrow) in Jerusalem and so on. Men can walk literally where Jesus walked with honest feelings with high emotions and with faithful thoughts. People must accept and honour His gracious invitation to take up the cross and follow Him and trust in Him for His sacrifice for their salvation.

WHAT RABBIS WROTE ABOUT JESUS?

We can easily understand the impression of the Jews about Jesus Christ as long as He was on the earth. He was fully engaged Himself with teaching preaching, doing miracles to create good impression and hope upon the poor and innocent people as Messiah and also healing the sick. This life of Christ is completely pictured in the four Gospels. It is also described in them how unnecessarily the Jews developed prejudices against Jesus Christ for His abnormal intelligence because He was filled with the Holy Spirit always but the Jews never accepted Him either as Messiah or the son of God or the king of Jews. The same prejudice against Him continued till He was crucified and died. So the Gospels are the basis for the full account of Jesus and His ministry and at the same time the hatred of Jews towards Him. But the common people did not have complete faith in His messianic claims and His ministry. The truth can be seen through the statements that the common people heard Him gladly (Mark 12:37) and many of the people believed in Him. At the same time some notable exceptions like Nicodemus and Joseph Arimathaea, the religious leaders of Pharisees and Sadducees vehemently rejected Jesus totally. This complete picture of the acceptance of the common people on one hand and complete rejection of some religious fanatics on the other were clearly illustrated and projected by (St. John 7:46-49). He gave a clear picture in the following lines.

The officials answered “Never a man spake like this man.” To this statement the Pharisees answered “Are ye rulers also deceived?” have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed in him?” But those people who knoweth not the law are cursed. The book of “Acts” and early church inform us with all details that there were many Jewish believes in the centuries after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However the official Jewish religious leadership continued their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah. What did the rabbis think about Nazarene who had actually offered them the kingdom of not of this world. And what memories of Jesus they must have had regarding his ministry and how they could transmit their memories about Him to their students or to the next generations. In this context I am trying to provide this article in a considerable and condensed manner the picture of Jesus Christ that is composed in the rabbinical literature during the first few centuries following the climatic events of in 30 AD.

The Talmud:- “This Talmud is considered to be the most prominent sources that gave scope for discovering the beliefs of the Jewish people in the early

centuries of the common era”, which is Abbreviated as C.E. the time after Christ known as “Anno Domini” which means the year of our Lord and this is abbreviated as A.D. Then the word Talmud literally means “Learning.” It is the name of a very big library consisting of the documents of about 63 noted individual writers or tract acts. This enormous collection of literature covers a wide range of subject as diverse as Biblical law medicine agriculture and philosophy. So to say it is the embodiment of “Oral law”, a compilation of Jewish religious traditions developed during some centuries and handed down orally from generation to generation.

And this Talmud is introduced to the public as two important parts. The first one is called “Mishma.” It was written in Hebrew language around 200 AD. The second one is called “Jermara.” It was written in aromatic language around 400 AD in Palestine and then in Babylonia in 500 AD. It is believed that Jermara is closely related to the earlier Mishma as in the same way as the Bible commentary is related to the Bible text. This wonderful collection of literature was sometimes referred to and complimented as a sea of Talmud (Yon hatal mud). This literature requires anybody’s lifetime continuous and careful study. Many attempts have been made in different stages to summarize the Talmud teachings in the accessible “Topics” because of the style followed by the rabbis as it appeared to be typical to the common leaders to comprehend. Many pages have been scribbled of what was said about the life of Jesus Christ and Christianity in Talmud and “Michrash” by Travers and Herford Pick in 1913. Another Hebrew Christian document is “The Jews and Jesus Christ” by Jacob Jocz which was first published in 1949.

Various authors tried their best to collect the matter through the Talmud tractats. And they indicated from those pieces of scattered ones some useful information to the public about the opinion of rabbis regarding Jesus in the following manner. In this context a particular quotation could be found only in the complete English translation of the Babylonian Talmud called the “Sancino Talmud” published in Sancino press in Great Britain. As found in that work the real name of Jesus occurred occasionally in the rabbinical literature naturally in the form of “Yeshu or yeshu hanotsri” which means Jesus the Nazarene. Sometimes He is referred to as Yeshu Ben Pantera or “Benstada” and in most of the occasions he is mentioned as a certain man or that man. Even if we give a curse reading to the statements made by rabbis with half knowledge about the life history of Jesus Christ in their writings. We can easily come to a conclusion that the rabbis authors did not know even the ABC about Jesus Christ or they

did not understand what the Gospels speak about Him. They also did not realize the fact that half knowledge of anything is always dangerous.

Between the statements made by the rabbis authors about Jesus and the actual facts mentioned in the Gospels by their writers who wrote them with divine spirit there is a gulf of difference and no coherence. They did not have even basic knowledge about the life of Jesus Christ but depicted about Him only false allegations. This half knowledge prompted them to give such statements which are not true but only to become unpopular among the popular leaders. The intention of these false allegations is only to degrade His image not only among the believers but also among the gentiles. The main reason for understanding in such away was due to the fact those rabbis continued their statements to ignored people through oral traditions. The real problem with such oral traditions is that if they are continued per centuries in course of time the original matter would be twisted and different and even unbelievable versions may come into existence. Such is the trouble with oral tradition but unfortunately their oral traditions continued for 2 to 5 centuries.

And in the case of Jesus Christ the same thing happened because of the oral tradition. Added to that this system was not kept in black and white. The oral method gives us the idea that the rabbis twisted the events written in the Gospels intentionally and produced the contradictory opinion about the life of Jesus Christ. The real motive behind the rabbis effort to present the distorted matter was to make Jesus Christ unfavorable light to humanity. The rabbis must have taken this step because of the ill treatment given to Jews by Christians during the third and the fourth centuries or it must be literary device planned to discourage Jews from considering Jesus as the viable alternative to faith. Whatever might be the motive behind all this there is no point in giving false and unbelievable picture about such a divine man and His wonderful deeds in this world. There is no indication of any type the modern scholars or at least trying to understand Jesus correctly whether they were Jews or gentiles who have believed in the statements as historical facts described in the Gospels. Apart from that most of the modern Jews are reluctant to the Talmud and so they are not usually biased by the statements. Therefore they have their individual ideas and impressions about Jesus. The people who are influenced by such erroneous comments are those who live in the protective cocoon of the Yeshiva world.

There are some young men who studied nothing but only Talmud and who have never been exposed to the fundamental principles of Jesus or at least

the main purpose of His coming to this world as Messiah or the historical facts about Him. They never thought of reading the New Testament to know the real facts about Jesus. It is unfortunate and we have to pity those people who thought that the knowledge of Jesus comes only through the erroneous remarks in the Talmud. This is another reason why we are burdened and diligent to get the truth out of those people who dwell in the darkness of misinformation and bias. In addition to all these references about the life history of Jesus Christ some old Jewish sources were already in existence with more elaborate and fantastic accounts of Jesus' life. It has become an important subject for more discussion among the people since the Middle Ages. As per the study of some of the renowned scholars "Toledot Yeshu" (which means history of Jesus) is located its origin to the fifth century AD. In this particular period the life of Jesus Christ was shown with some features of the traditions of Talmudic references. But those references were with more elaborate and less restrained in their comments. The main purpose of these scattered comments in both "Talmud and Toledot" were to replace completely the Gospel stories with their own false accounts as cock and bull stories from the birth of Jesus of all the events that happened from the time of His birth till the inhuman crucifixion and death. They had another evil intention that is to replace the book of the Acts of the apostles who always mentioned Peter and Paul in an unfavorable light. It happened so to mention some of the events of the Nazarene church history during first few centuries after writing the book of Acts.

In the Hebrew and Yiddish versions the Toledot Yeshu has had the wild circulation and influence primarily in the Eastern European Jewish commentaries. This written document served as the most popular recorded hand book and also the only authentic sources left to the Jewish people to know something about Jesus Christ. Jacob Jocz wrote from his own experience prior to his first accepting Jesus as his personal savior for his salvation since then he developed good faith in Jesus Christ. This Toledot Yeshu handbook has to be read with good relish especially on Christmas eve and even now the (1940s) Jewish school boys in countries like Poland are given the evening free to enjoy the story on the Night of Natal (nativity). The less number of Talmudic references and the hateful accounts offered by Toledot Yeshu remained for centuries as two important sources upon which the Jewish people to draw their information about the details of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. He spent three and half years in hectic ministry of teaching, preaching and healing the sick.

Though some of them were disagreed in what He said about eternal life salvation etc. still all of them were with one voice in accusing Him and pointed out His birth was shameful and His death cruel. They also pointed out His healing the sick was nothing but magical and sorcery. Why all these accusations motivated against Him was only to make Jewish people to develop hatred against Him and His divine thinking by keeping away themselves from any Christian influence. They tried all means to defame Him and they could become successful in many instances. Recently an Israeli American who is called American citizen happened to speak with a friend of mine here in USA. In his formal conversation with him he spoke about untruth assessment about Jesus. He said he was taught all those things mentioned about Jesus in “Yeshiva” when he was a young boy then my friend who knew something about the information that Yeshiva contained reminded the Israelite that all those stories were nothing but manipulated ones with bias and personal hatred towards Him and so they should not be taken into account as reliable and authentic.

But the Israelite boldly confessed by saying those stories he studied as a young boy are undoubtedly correct and the stories from the Gospels about Jesus’ life and other details as He was a Messiah, the son of God and the king of Jews, All this is absolutely wrong. In spite of such differences the modern Jewish men and the scholars recognized those incorrect documents were composed only with prejudice and inaccuracy. In addition to that the average Jewish person today in the west is not at all interested to know in detail many of legends and traditions of early period. Let us not bother much about the mental setup of early Jewish people or the scholars regarding their assessment of Jesus Christ in different periods. It is said the “Orthodox camp of Judaism” was however isolated from reasonable scholarship. They are afraid of even to touch the New Testament. To say frankly even the so called priests of Judaism did not believe in the distorted pictures of Jesus printed in those documents. This present situation and the mental setup of Jewish people are posing wonderful challenge to all the concerned believers to understand. The Israelites should look into the correct information about Jesus and His precious life. So somehow or other we must try to provide to those unbelieving Jews and Gentiles the true message of our Lord Jesus Christ and Messiah who have been under false impression about Him who have been misled by their own bias and who were fed by such false information. Let us try our level best to mold them to understand the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ that remained hidden all those days by some selfish people with ulterior motive, so that they can quench their thirsty souls either by reading or listening to the truth and true message of Jesus Christ.

IMPORTANCE OF HOLINESS

“The destined end of man is not happiness nor health but holiness”. One of the aims of God is the production of saints. He is not an eternal blessing machine for man. He did not come to save man out of pity. He came to save man because He created him to be holy. It is clearly said that one can achieve holiness only through painful and righteous process. Some scholars were of the opinion that even with great effort one could not achieve this holiness but God gives it. Holiness is God’s gift. If a man and a woman wished to possess that holiness through some means it is no doubt ridiculous and we should weep rather than laugh at such attempts.

Jesus was born sinless. He lived sinless life. He lived only 33 and a half years with spotless character and He did not experience old age. When the Bible tells about the holiness of God two points will come to our minds primarily. His separateness and difference between Him and other human beings. We can conceive or know He is infinitely greater and more powerful besides being qualitatively utterly dissimilar from us and from the universe. He is the creator and we are made in His image. There is a chasm of endless deep between what He is and what we are. So God says “I am what I am and there is nothing with which I can be compared”. The second point is the mortality concern which is bound up with qualitative difference which is clubbed with ethical beauty and moral perfection. God’s holiness is not merely total separation from uncleanness but also goodness beyond our capacity to comprehend. Even the heavens are unclean in His sight. God wants to share with us the same goodness and beauty. He wants us to be like Him. He wants to give us the quality of life. He wants to redeem us and use us for His service and He likes us to take part in His moral perfection.

Once we became Christians God would like to do more for us by pardoning our sins. He is the judge of the living and dead. He redeemed us with His blood on the cross and made us walk in His light by holding our hand. The process by which He called us righteous in the same way our peace was restored with Him which is called justification “Therefore since we are justified by our faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”. (Romans 5:1). God did much more to justify and sanctify us. He is not satisfied simply by declaring our righteousness but He wished to share with us His holiness. God did two things to us and when He was sanctified by the operation of the Holy Spirit God set us apart for His own use. He wanted to maintain good works a

deliberate refrain from sin and to perform active Christian duties and responsibilities as the main issue.

All the theologians argued that only human efforts are not enough and the power for living must come from God alone. And all the scholars are under the impression that the basis for sanctification is God's intervention in the incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of His son Jesus Christ and the help is mediated by the holy spirit who has brought the believers union with our savior Jesus Christ. We should not be confused or feel difficulty if any incident makes us surprise. The New Testament itself in the first place seems to express different points of view "Workout your own salvation with fear and trembling apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians clearly expressing an active view of true Christian life. Yet with no pause he goes on for God is good pleasure." (Philippians 2:12-13).

A Christian should be passive in the hands of God who actively works within Him. And God makes man not only to do what He wants but also makes decisions within the man to do His will. We must have to work because God is always working within us. The New Testament constantly presents both active and passive approaches to holiness without any sense of contradiction. We had to realize in this context that we are dealing with one of the mysteries of the scripture that is the mystery of the interaction between our will and the will of God. The glorious work of God is in progress within us. He wanted to process us for divine use and with the help of Holy Spirit, God wished to make us holy people. The outcome of transformation is "Do not be confirmed to this world but be transformed". (Romans 12:2) but this transformation is not a overnight process. It may take even our lifetime but continuous progress in holiness is assured. The sanctification progress would also continue in us once we become Christians and God has set us apart for His Sacred service.

The Holy Spirit is eager for the process of fitting us to continue. Some understand this holiness as the work of God which any Christian can contribute anything to our efforts to strive after holiness must be unveiling. So to say "In my flesh there may not be any goodness remains as my contribution – therefore I trust in God and rest in His goodness. I do not want to struggle anymore to control my temper but allow my Jesus to handle my temper." There are two opinions regarding holiness which are called active views and passive views with which a Christian has to fight and to pray. Some leaders of the active schools stress more on what they called the means of grace. Yielding may be

good but not exclude watching praying and meditation on the scriptures have fellowship with the other believers and in this wonderful task we and God are involved.

Let us try to understand one thing wisely that is without the spirit of God within us our efforts are futile because from our sinful heart no good thing can come out. Gods love on us is unconditional. He redeemed and sanctified us with His pure and perfect love. He likes to make use of us for His service. So if we agree to that point God is everything to us then let us yield to Him and behave according to His will. Here yielding to Him means bowing to Him as our king and once it is done let us march forward with His armor and with His miraculous strength by declaring war on all satanic elements. Then let us consider the importance of holiness on the human beings. In the (1 Peter 1:15-16) it is said just as who called you holy so be holy in all you do for it is written “Be holy because I am holy”. Therefore let us try with all our efforts to be holy. As it is written without holiness no one will see the Lord. But the historic Christian teaching on holiness is almost forgotten. We have to feel sorry for that because it is most important to the glory of God and the good of souls. Once upon a time all Christians had great emphasis on God’s call to holiness and also he spoke how to achieve that. In particular, some of the evangelical Protestants offered continuously different types of information regarding what God required of us.

The puritans had their own opinion about this subject. They insisted our life and relationship must become “Holiness to the Lord”. John Wesley taught to the world that God had raised up “Methodism” to spread spiritual holiness throughout the land. Along with him some other teachers commented in favor of “Holiness revival” which touched all Evangelical Christendom between the mid 19th and mid 20th centuries. But things are different today. We are listening to sermons reading books, able to write books and even commenting and communicating on the Bible. We are behaving like Christians. We never imagine as once the high way of holiness is opened for the believers than the preachers and other people would come to know that. Then with authority and confidence they would speak about God and His holiness.

Holy in Hebrew and Greek languages means “Separated and the self apart for God”. If we apply that to people it is said God’s holy one’s or assimilation, devotion in this context. He is living the life of service to God where as assimilation in the sense of imitating confirming and becoming like the

God one serves. Actually holiness starts inside our body with a right purpose. Any holy person's motivation is passions, desires, longing, aspiration, goal and drive to praise in order to please God. God's works begin with praise, worship, honoring, and exalting of God as the temper of one's whole life. The Pharisees during the time of Jesus committed many mistakes. They felt proud of themselves by feeling they were very holy till Jesus exposed them to the public what they were in practical life. As true Christians we must formulate the Gospel to others our evangelism to ourselves as born again believers. We are called to live by it. We must keep having stress on faith and come to Christ we have to trust His promises. We must achieve in what God was doing with our lives and hoping for citizenship in heaven. We touch very lightly on repentance by bending one's own conscience to God's moral law confessing and for seeking one's sins making restitution for past wrong things grieving before God for the dishonor one's is sins and forming a game plan for holy living.

It is formed through history the past Christian culture did not give any importance to moral values only some persons in the society thought about morality or immorality basing on the work they did. Christians of western countries seemed to have argued upon especially where sex and shackles are concerned. A certain group of Christians argued whether repentance is necessary. Some people as Biblical option and to confirm that Gospel is also called faith a call to repentance. Many people must have heard variety of sermons especially on repentance as a vital lifelong discipline. Whatever we plan to preach the Gospel we must make a point to stress more on repentance and holiness through which repentance is expressed as a spiritual necessity. So we should not ignore the importance of holiness under all conditions in our preaching because God tells about the value of holiness in all scriptures in the law, in the Gospels, in the words of the prophets, in the wisdom writing of great authors, in the Epistles in the history books the judgment of the past and the book of revelation. All the above said sources stress more on the necessity of holiness for a true Christian.

As a matter of fact, holiness is the goal of our redemption. Christ died on the cross for our justification. We are justified and we are sanctified and finally made holy. Holiness is the object of our creation. We are born again so that we may grow up with the believers of Jesus Christ. Holiness is the real health of a person. So anything other than holiness in the character of a person is nothing but ugliness and deformity. It is like the malfunctioning of the individual and the crippled condition of the soul. The meaning of righteousness is holy, integrity and uprightness. It is the breast plate for the armor of God that Christians are

advised to wear that in order to counter the devils attacks. Holiness also gives creditability to witness holy ways and means. It will enhance our testimony but worldly ways undermine our image. You are the light of the world let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds (Good works) and praise the Father in heaven about whom you told them and whose power they now see in your living. Therefore if we want to be successful in our evangelism we must cultivate holiness of life. Finally, holiness is the substance of which happiness is derived. Those who pursue holiness through the grace of God happiness of spirit will come to them automatically unasked. "I delight in your commands because I love them — they are the joy of my heart." (Psalms 119:47). After reading this I am confident of every Christian who will understand the importance and value of holiness in his or in her life.

Abiding in Christ is the real source of holiness. "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the wine so neither can you unless you abide in Me I am the wine you are the branches, he who abides in Me and I in him he bears much fruit – for apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15:4-5). Proper understanding of fundamental principles of the Bible is essential part of Christians in the evangelical churches which show their maturity." So maturity of mind Biblically is Christ like character. If we know all the principles of the Bible and no character we are nothing but hypocrites. If we want to live Christian life without Christ in us it bears no fruit because without Christ we can do nothing, but only with the grace of our Lord we can live true Christian life.

It is said progressive sanctification is a supernatural work. It is a victory over sin and death through Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. It is God's victory but not our greatness. It is only God who can redeem us from the power of sin keeps us free from the past life and makes us a new creation in Christ. To be a Christian does not mean we have more powers in ourselves. We are inwardly connected to the source of power that is able to overcome the lives of sin and death which is the law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ. There are some advantages of abiding in Christ. The Christian life can attain progress through living in union with Christ through faith. This wonderful thought is expressed in the Bible in many ways.

- 1) "As you therefore have received Jesus Christ the Lord so walk in Him having been firmly routed and now being built up in Him and established in your faith first as you are instructed." (Colossians 26:7).

- 2) "I no longer live for Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith in the son of God." (Galatians 2:10).
- 3) "Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power". (Ephesians 6:10)
- 4) "We grow by holding fast to the head which is Christ." (Colossians 2:19).
- 5) "Cloth yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." (Romans 13:14).
- 6) "Whatever you do whether in word or deed do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus."(Colossians 3:17).

As we understand the above passages all our life strength and our activities as believers are connected to Jesus Christ. They have to come out of our being in union with Christ. This naked truth could not be made dear than it is in Jesus statement about the necessity abide in Him. Abide in me and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the wine so neither can you unless you abide in Me — for apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15: 4-5). The word "Abide" is from Greek translation. It also means "Remain or continue" but in the Gospel of John in the context of a relationship with Christ it denotes more than a static relationship. In our relationship with Christ is seen in the relationship between the father and Jesus Christ even as we abide in Christ He in us so do the son and the father abide in each other. The outcome of Christ abiding in His father is that everything He says or does manifests the character of the father.

We have the same type of relationship with Christ just as Christ has with the father we abide in Christ and obey Him as He abide in us. According to scripture abiding in Christ involves two important things. The first one is we nourish ourselves through faith in all that Christ is to us. The second point is we follow Him in obedience to His commandments to speak the truth we are back to the simple concept of trust and obey. We must receive Christ by faith. Abiding in Christ means first we must receive His life and then apply that to our life through faith. In a vivid statement it is called depending appropriation and assimilation. Jesus said "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him." (John 6:56). Jesus said He abided in His father. It means He lived in complete obedience to Him in the same way we too must abide in Christ and live in obedience to our father's commands having in union with Christ is necessary for our spiritual growth and in holiness. Our nourishment from Christ precedes our ability to obey is seen in Jesus' command to love one another. But it is not possible to show this love unless we are obeying in God's love. We love Him because He first loved us.

It is useless of trying to love others unless we first nourish ourselves by receiving God's love afresh. As we receive God's love we have to respond that love by obeying His commandments. Christ said "If you love me you will obey what I command." Holiness indicates our perfect life. In Romans it is said "For sin shall not be your master because you are not under law but under grace." (Romans 6:14). God seemed to have sprinkled His grace upon the earth to trust His children and the Bible has suitable answer for every problem of sin. There is hope for everyone of us so that we can walk in obedience to God's word and live a life of holiness. In fact God expects every believer to live a holy life and holiness is not only expected from us but also it is the promised birth right of every Christian believer.

Let us remember the statement of apostle Paul in this context "Sin shall not be our master." For the present generation the very concept of holiness may appear "Archaic" and they look at it in different angles. Yet holiness is very much a spiritual idea. The word holiness we can find in the Bible about 600 times in different forms. The entire book of Leviticus is devoted to the subject and the idea of holiness is woven elsewhere throughout fabric of scripture. Anyway God reminds us time and again to be holy. The idea of how one can be holy has suffered from many false notions. It is openly prohibited in certain area like drinking, smoking and dancing and the list of prohibitions differ from place to place and from a group of people. If we permit this kind of approach to holiness we are in danger of becoming like Pharisees who had their self righteous attitude. For some people holiness means a particular type of dress and mannerisms. For another type of people holiness means an unattainable perfection. But in real sense to be holy means to be blameless in morality. It has to be separated from sin and therefore consecrated to God. The best way of understanding the concept of holiness is perhaps to note how the writers of the New Testament used that word. In the (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7) Apostle Paul used the word in contrast to the life of immorality and impurity. Peter used this word in contrast to living according to evil desires.

So to live a holy life is to live in conformity to the moral precept of the Bible and in contrast to the sinful ways of life of the world. If holiness is basic need of Christian life then let us try to experience the same in our day to day life. In such case the church of Christ need not more confirmed to the people around it and then the God. Our first and foremost problem is our attitude towards the sin which is more self controlled than God controlled. That means we are more concerned about our victory than our sins which grieve the heart

of the Lord. We should not accept failures in our struggle against sin because we are success oriented. God wants us to walk in obedience only but never in victory. Obedience is oriented towards God. Whereas victory is oriented towards self. If we concentrate on living obedient and holy life we will certainly experience the joy of victory over sin.

The next problem is we have misunderstood the saying “Living by faith” that is no effort on holiness is required on our part. We can even suggest only effort on our part of the faith. We must face the fact we have the responsibility of our walk in holiness. Our other problem is we do not consider certain sins seriously. People may categorize some sins tolerable and some intolerable. It is said holiness is everyday business. When godliness produced in us from the life that is deep within us then that godliness is real and everlasting and genuine essence of the Lord. When we think of holiness great saints like George Muller and Giants of Faith like Mother Teresa would come to our minds. Holiness is not a private preservation or property of any elite, corps, martyres, mysteries or even Nobel prize winners.

Holiness is everyday business of all Christians. It remains with us whenever we take any decision about anything or whatever we do in our regular life. It remains with us of all times and on all occasions. Holiness is simply obeying God and sharing His love even though it appears to be inconvenient to us. If we think about heroism it is an extraordinary feat of the flesh whereas holiness is an ordinary act of the spirit. Heroism may bring individual glory but holiness always gives glory to God. The Ten Commandments from which all the other commandments came later had their origin about 3500 years ago. When God engraved them on blue tablets and gave them to Moses on Mount Sinai. And we have been following them even today. After that the life of Jesus Christ provided holiness in the flesh and Jesus in His self denial is unqualified obedience to His father will and fullness of the Holy Spirit in His daily life are the best examples for us. As Mother Teresa pointed out “Our progress in holiness depends on God and ourselves –on God’s grace and on our will to be holy.” In this context let us study the problematic saying of Paul to the church of Rome on one hand he says we are dead to sin and in the next verse he exalts us not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies.

The statement of Paul appears to be quite contradictory. According to him man need not turn away from sin which is already dead. We are dead to sin because Christ died for our sin still as we live day by day this sin remains in

reality. Though God gave us the will to be holy, the daily fight requires our continuous effort. The truth is holy living demands constant examination of our abilities and notions. Since it is not simply what wrong we do to our neighbor by cheating him or by abusing ourselves whether it is a sin or all sins are a root cause of rebellion or offense to God. A noted scholar called it cosmic treason “The outcome of all this is we must understand one thing that is what we have to do to please God is important but not what God can do for us. In our life personal problems may come and go but they are not our issue or object. A true Christian’s maturity holiness and sanctification are the most requisite qualifications for a true believer.

HEAVENS ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE

Heaven is not a place reserved only for the people who do good things. Heaven is not a final destination for all kinds of people because it is very good and loving place to allow all people to spend eternity. The spiritual ideas of the old communicated good theology which suggested that everybody will be talking about the blessed heaven but they themselves are not going there. Jesus taught to His followers, “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in there at”(Matthew 7.13). Again Jesus said in contrast, “Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7.14).

The Hebrew word for heaven is “Shamayin.” This particular word has its own importance in the Bible especially in the Old Testament because it occurred more than 400 times. As we see the Bible opens with the declaration that “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth” (Genesis 1.1). Both the heaven and the Earth are perfect in the material universe. God created them and they were frequently quoted together in the scriptures. For the purpose of understanding the physical and spiritual universe is paralleled the Earth and the sky to some extent. Heaven is simply defined as the expansion of space over the Earth like a dome. But it is more complex to human eye to comprehend.

According to the Bible there are 3 Heavens. And the first one is atmospheric heaven as the air surrounding the Earth wherein the birds fly. And God said, “Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that have life and fowl that may fly above the Earth in the open firmament of heaven.” (Genesis 1.20).

Next the Bible speaks about the “Terrestrial heavens” as the visible sky where the sun, the moon, and stars appear. And then God said, “Let there be light in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night and let there be signs and seasons and for days and years. God made two lights-the greater light and the lesser light. The greater light would rule the day and the lesser light will rule the night.

It is really surprising to see prophet Moses, though he lived about 1500 years before the birth of Jesus Christ he understood that the heavenly bodies were giving to the Earth, the seasons, days, and years. God seemed to have given to Moses the power of understanding about the heavenly bodies. Then we hear about the third heaven called the “celestial heaven” which must be the

abode of God Himself. Apostle Paul wrote in this context, “I know a man in Christ about 14 years ago (whether in the body I cannot tell or whether out of the body I cannot tell as God knows everything as he is Omniscient such a one caught up to the third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12.2). The correct relationship between the heaven and the Earth is very broad and substantial which is not so easy to understand. The most striking point in this regard is that the Earth has little impact on the heaven, whereas the heaven has an absolute and unlimited impact on the Earth.

As a matter of fact, blessings would come down from heaven only from God. In the same way the priest in the holy temple blesses the worshipper. The king blesses his subjects (His people). The father blesses his children always even though they don't deserve sometimes due to their behavior. And finally the heaven from above blesses the Earth down. In order to understand the uniqueness of heaven, some concepts are quoted below from the Old Testament. Following are some of the opinions of the inspired writers and prophets regarding the greatness of the heaven :

- 1) The heavens are created by God.
- 2) The heavens and the Earth are frequently called upon to testify that God keeps His covenants.
- 3) Prayer to God is directed upward (towards heaven).
- 4) God is infinite and the heavens cannot contain Him.
- 5) Men are continuously warned not to worship the hosts of heaven like the sun, the moon, the stars, etc.
- 6) There is no other God in heaven or on the Earth who possesses the greatness and power of the Lord.
- 7) The heavens are sometimes shut up (do not give the rain because of sin).
- 8) The Lord is EL ELYON-the most high God, possessor of the heaven and Earth.
- 9) The Lord talks to men on Earth from heaven.
- 10) The Lord opens the windows of heaven to bless the faithful.
- 11) Heaven is the dwelling place of God and angelic beings.

- 12) The Lord judges from heaven.
- 13) The Lord hears prayers in heaven.
- 14) The Lord sits on His throne in heaven surrounded by the angelic hosts.
- 15) The Lord of heaven rules over all the kingdoms of the nations.
- 16) The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men.
- 17) The heaven keeps declaring the glory of God and the firmament keeps showing His handiwork.
- 18) The Lord judges the Earth from heaven.
- 19) The Lord of heaven is sovereign in His universe. He does as He pleases.
- 20) The Lord who dwells in heaven is omnipresent.
- 21) When the Lord prepared the heavens His son was present.
- 22) The heavens are higher than the Earth and the Lord's ways are higher than our ways.
- 23) The heavens are the Lord's throne and the Earth His footstool.
- 24) The Lord will one day create a new heaven and a new Earth.
- 25) The God of heaven is the revealer of secrets what we call the past, present, and future are all known to Him.
- 26) The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed.
- 27) The God of heaven is omnipotent.
- 28) Men may choose to oppose the God of heaven but they do so at great peril.

As I have mentioned above, we can find hundreds of examples of verses in the Old Testament which give the clear picture of heaven. In such description one thing stands out above all: that is its absence. It is like a "Neon" light. There is no hint, or hope, dream, aspiration, or speculation that a righteous man or woman of the Old Testament have gone to heaven after death. And also, the concept of heaven as a home with God is not found in the Old Testament Scriptures. However the scriptures will not suggest that the people were without

hope or without knowledge. So the most dominating theme of the Old Testament is that of the coming of Messiah who will be a descendant of Abraham and King David. And what this Messiah will do in his second coming-

- 1) He will deliver man from the curse of sin permanently.
- 2) He will establish an eternal kingdom on Earth.
- 3) The kingdom he will establish must be the kingdom of righteousness.
- 4) His new kingdom shall be plenty of everything.
- 5) It will be a kingdom wherein the wolf lie down with the lamb.
- 6) It will be a kingdom where no catastrophic or calamities occur at any time.
- 7) It will be a kingdom where every man sit under his own fig tree fully satisfied and fulfilled.

The blessed hope of the Old Testament believers is not in going to heaven but of a future glorious kingdom ruled by an omnipotent righteous all-knowing king on Earth. As written in the Old Testament, when a man died people simply talked about it and said he went down to the grave (sheol) and what happened to that body afterwards it seemed they were not interested to find out the details.

According to historical background "Job" lived earlier than prophet Moses and his book called "The Book of Job" was the first written one of the bible. And it is testified to the fact "For I know that my redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the later day (at the end of the age) upon the Earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body to death, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19. 25-26). Job believed in resurrection and at the end of the age, prophet Daniel also under divine inspiration gave us the complete description of the course of the world history until the return of Jesus Christ.

And said to His prophet, "But go thou thy way till the end be (till the end of the age) for thou shalt rest (die) and stand in thy lot (be resurrected) at the end of the days" (Daniel 12.13). As Job had his own faith regarding his resurrection, Prophet Daniel also had his own belief that he would be resurrected and enter into the earthly kingdom of Jesus Christ. So, the belief on the part of the Old Testament believers regarding the Messianic kingdom was not a misguided hope.

In the New Testament the word used for heaven is “Overanoes” and this word is used for about 290 times. From this total it is used 70 times in the gospel of Matthew alone and in the last book called “Revelation” heaven is used for 55 times. So, altogether this word heaven is used in the Holy Bible 690 times. The strong faith of all believers is that they would go to heaven after their death because with that faith only they embraced Christianity.

Their belief is that the body will go into the grave and become dust in course of time and the soul called the immortal part of the body soars higher and higher and finally reaches the presence of the living God in heaven. Then at the time of Christ’s second-coming there will be a resurrection of all those believers who died in faith. The Bible also speaks about the physical body that is kept in the grave which is corruptible and mortal would be resurrected and becomes incorruptible and immortal. Then it will be united with the soul to meet the Lord, God in the clouds.

After we are resurrected, glorified, and meet the Lord in the clouds, we have to think about the next stay. One example is worth mentioned in this connection. A pastor happened to question his own son while he is preaching in his church. He asks his son who is just 6 years old boy whether he wishes to go to heaven after death. Then the boy gives immediate answer to his father’s question. The boy replies that he is not too keen and serious on that subject at that time. The pastor is surprised and stunned at his answer. But he is impatient and asks the boy again to know the impression and understanding of his son about the heaven is one long boring service. Those words show that the pastor must be preaching about heaven more frequently in the church.

It is said sometimes that heaven represented as a place where the redeemed will sit on the clouds and play some music the whole day. And those people who are spiritual minded among us might suggest we will bow and cast our crowns at the feet of our Lord. We should not show any disrespect to heaven because it is more than one glorious on-going church service.

Our heavenly father kept many wonderful things in store for the sake of His children. It is simply like a participation in a kingdom of a perfected one without any blemish or ravages of sin. Heaven is the most precious place for our life and hope. Our treasure is the heaven. Our names are written in the books of heaven. It is not an ordinary place to think about. God has abundantly blessed us with all His heavenly blessings. Of all the gospel writers, it was only Matthew who used the expression “the kingdom of God.”

John the Baptist while giving baptism to different people used to say in his message, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”(Matthew 3.2). Even the Lord while sending His disciples on missionary work to different places commanded them with the following words, “And as ye go, preach saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”(Matthew 10.7).

Jesus Christ, after He was baptized by John the Baptist, got the identification as the promised Messiah. From that time onwards He began to preach in the public as recorded in the bible and in His ministry He said, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Why it is said that the kingdom of heaven is at hand because at present the kingdom of heaven is on Earth. And the people have been reminded of it time and again so that they would repent for their sins.

Wherever Jesus went in His preaching the disciples also followed Him. They began to understand him gradually, what He was preaching about. Then one day the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. And He told them in the following manner-

“Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in Earth
As it is in heaven.....”

There is no doubt God’s will is done in heaven perfectly and willingly. On the Earth God’s will is opposed by lost men and a demonic host who always served Satan obediently. As those demonic people have been serving that cunning Satan, are reminded to repent for their wrong choice of such demon, Satan. This is the reason why God is asking us to leave the deceitful Satan and then repent for that. He is asking us to pray as “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in Earth as it is in heaven.” The kingdom of which John the Baptist spoke, the kingdom of which the disciples were taught and the kingdom of which the Lord Himself spoke was prophecised in the Old Testament. But it is offered and rejected in the gospels. Postponed in the Epistles and

Established in the book of Revelation

At Christ’s coming.

In this connection, Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” (John 18:36). That does not mean He will not rule this earthly kingdom as some vain people speak. Jesus, in His regular teachings, said that He would not rule this world (Cosmos) or an ordered sinful system and arrangement which is planned by Satan. But Jesus the Messiah wanted to purge the Earth from all its defilement and pollution of sin during the days of the Lord and then only He will establish a golden age on the Earth.

In the book of Revelation, we can find the wonderful description of heaven by our beloved disciple, John, what he had seen in his vision. So to say, the entire human history John wrote in that book. He wrote “And I Saw a New Heaven and a New Earth for the First Heaven and the First Earth have passed away and there Was No More Sea.” (Revelation 21.1). In his vision the heaven and the Earth were not at all new regarding their origin but they were new only in respect of their quality. John saw the present heaven and Earth which were completely purged or cleaned, regenerated, and maintained in perfect condition.

Apostle John saw the new heaven and the new Earth in their pristine glory and beauty as Adam and Eve had seen in the Garden of Eden, prior to the advent of sin. And as a result of that sin, a curse came upon the entire creation. According to Greek New Testament, there are 2 words properly translated. The first word is “Neos” translated into “New” and time is involved in this reference. We can also say a new (Neos) means a recent one or young one. As we find the reference as new wine it can be called “Neo Wine.” Then we must say it is this years wine from this years crop new in time.

The other Greek word for “new” is (Kainos). This word means new in quality, superior in quality to the old one. In the upper room, the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the new (Kainos) covenant. The covenant which is qualitatively better than the old one called the Mosaic Covenant. Apostle Paul used this word more appropriately. He said and taught in the churches that a believer in Christ is a new (Kainos) creation. What Paul really wanted to say is that the man who became a believer in Christ is far superior in quality to the man who has not believed in Christ. This man is actually in his ungenerated condition in Adam but it is the same person. To say in nutshell there is a gulf of difference between a believer and non-believer.

So when Apostle John wrote about the new heaven and new Earth he used the Greek word “Kainos” only for the purpose of emphasizing the quality

of new heaven and new Earth, but not to say there were new in time and in origin. As a matter of fact, they were the same heaven and the same Earth that were cleansed and regenerated from the consequences of sin. It is Kainos far superior in quality to the old one's. There are the present Earth and the present heaven which were purged "during the days of the Lord." They became new heaven and new Earth when they were touched by the master's hand.

Dr. Henry Moris, a great commentator on the book of Revelation, said that the new Cosmos (World) is not a novel Cosmos. It is a renewed Cosmos. It is just like the first except that all its age long ravages of decay have been expunged (destroyed) and it is made fresh and new again. After studying all the information given by Apostle John about new heaven and new Earth in his book of Revelation, we can have a clear picture that the new heaven and the new Earth are not blotted out nor swept into nothingness but they are retouched, changed, renovated, cleansed, and brightened. And also they are regenerated from their old disorders and imperfections.

Another popular commentator, Joseph Seiss, in his commentary on Revelation, wrote something more than 100 years ago. He continued to speak with authority, with eloquence and with considerable insight. He gave the clear picture of the new heaven and the new Earth in his commentary. When God purges the Cosmos by fire and reveals it, the planet Earth becomes qualitatively perfect. After that perfection, they will become a new heaven and a new Earth. The result of that is all nature with anticipation awaits that memorable day so that they would be freed from the curse of sin. And also Apostle Peter mentioned in one of his early sermons. He linked that modification with Christ's second-coming and called it "The Restitution" or "The Restoration of All Things."

Once Jesus Christ spoke about that auspicious day with His disciples. He happened to preach "Verily, I say unto you that ye which have followed me in the regeneration when the son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory ye shall also sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matthew 19:28).

Apostle Paul also used the same words while he was writing about the believers who were quite different from other people of the society. He clearly pointed out that the believers were the "new birth" (Kainos). Thayer, in his Greek "lexicon" of the New Testament, wrote about the word "regeneration." It is like giving a signal about glorious change of all things (in heaven and on the

Earth) for the betterment. It is also like the restoration of the perfect condition of everything that is in existence before the fall of our first parents.

We must have to give some importance to the remarks of the commentators also. When they said the old heaven and the old Earth passed away, and the new heaven and the new Earth have come into existence, we, as Leaders, must honor their statements. John too expressed the same idea in his book of Revelation. Here, the meaning of that Greek verb “pass away” is to come, to pass, come forth, go, pass, Passover, transgress, etc. But one thing is certain: no proper illustration of this verb is given either in the bible or in the classical Greek. And here, in this context, it is spoken of a passing of from corrupted and polluted heaven and Earth into a renovated and perfect heaven and Earth, from this age-to the age to come in future.

The terms used by Apostle Peter describing the annihilation of the present heaven and Earth are sometimes argued at different stages while he was giving the picture of Noahic flood. He said, “Whereby the world that then was being overflowed with water perished.” (2 Peter 3.6).

Peter argued that the same type of fate which is still in store for the Earth. Then the next time it will be the judgement of the Earth by fire rather than with water. Whether it was perished in the days of Noah the correct answer is no. The world is perished; but the Earth remained unchanged. The world is perished; but the eight members of Noah’s family were alive. The world is perished; but the animals representing of all species of life both male and female, were preserved in the ark. Then after the flood water receded, Noah’s family members and all the animals disembarked the ark. And finally God blessed the family of Noah by saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the Earth.” (Genesis 9.1).

The heaven and Earth remained after the world perished. Peter also mentioned about the elements in heaven were melting in a firvent heat and the works of Earth being burned up. In the light of some of the realities, Peter rhetorically inspired and said, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved what manner of people or persons aught ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.” (2 Peter 3.11). The translation of the word “dissolved” means to loosen. It was the same that Jesus used when he asked his disciples to bring the colt for the purpose of Palm Sunday and said, “Loose him.” Next, when Jesus was at the tomb of Lazarus after four days of his death....

CHRONOLOGICAL EVENTS IN REVELATION

As Christians we all know the first four books of the New Testament which are called Gospels which means “Good News” because those four books revealed the true history of Jesus Christ regarding His preaching’s His teachings His miracles and His healing of the sick. He taught many things to His disciples and other people whoever went to Him and finally sacrificed His life as a lamb to purchase salvation to all humanity during His first coming. This is genuinely called the best news available from the Gospels. The Holy Bible contains 66 books and the last one is “The book of Revelation” which means “unveiling” and it is also called by some historians the “Fifth Gospel” why it is called so because it is prophetically revealed the wonderful triumph of Jesus Christ what He will do as the lion of the tribe of Judah at His second coming to consummate our salvation. What all is said about Him has to happen according to prophetic news from the Gospels.

As a matter of fact, without the book of Revelation the Gospels are simply an ongoing graphic account of humanity and their sinful tragic epic defeat. All of us must praise God for inspiring the divine author St. John for writing the book of revelation through visions. It is said the everlasting life is linked with some more things that Christ would accomplish when He comes for the second time to this planet. The first and second comings should be imagined as separate happenings because of the ample gap between the two. In spite of long gap between both the first one initially depends upon the second and the second depends upon the first. The first coming requires the second coming and it cannot occur without the first.

The book of Revelation speaks about the light, joy, victory and eternal blessings at the end of life’s journey. The darkness, doom, gloom, defeat are necessary and without defeat we cannot make the way for light, joy, glory, and even eternal blessings. In the same way the son of God had to die on the cross at Calvary for our sins so that He would be resurrected on the third day to conquer death and grave. The son of God must purge the world which is polluted and defiled before it is brought into the Messianic Era. During the period of His second coming people may have to suffer because of famine. It is not a famine for want of bread and other daily necessary things but it is the famine of hearing the word of God by people who are about seven billion on this planet. It is not because of lack of commentators to provide us with up to date inspiration. As a matter of fact, we have more commentators on the book of Revelation than

most other books from the Bible. First of all, we must congratulate those authors who labored to understand the book of Revelation correctly and write some commentaries. But some other authors who looked at them with different perspective felt they are erroneous and not up to the mark. Another group of commentators pointed out that their contribution was unnecessarily technical.

Some of the authors have brought erroneous prophetic theological baggage with them which is inappropriately influencing them and their interpretations and out of many commentators only a few are able to grip the chronology of the book of Revelation accurately. As a result, many unnecessary attempts have been made on shattering events and discussion from the book. It appears they have done their commentaries looking into their chronological backbone and leave the readers without comprehensive understanding of the Book of Revelation. Nobody can assess correct interpretation without proper understanding of the chronology of the children of God that there is spiritual famine throughout the land. Understanding of unveiling of Christ at the end of age as our victorious conquering king as set faith in the book of Revelation and the period of famine is intensified because the events spoken of in the book are dramatically and rapidly coming into clear focus by the action of men and movements of nations of the present hour of history. The correct understanding of what God has revealed in the book of revelation regarding the last days would fill us with great hope in the present because it shows us we are on the victorious side of history.

It will also enable the generation of believers who enter these days to remain faithful fruitful and triumphant. Some Bible teachers among them and some of our best will seek the example of church from Daniel's 70th week ironically called the tribulation period by the pre-tribulation rapture. The problem in this context is inspite of their good intention the result would be that the generations have to face some calamities and those characteristics are clearly depicted in the book of Revelation. To say frankly, the book of Revelation is a gallery of pictures and St. John was a great painter who never handled a brush. The writers who were able to understand the chronological order of the pictures can write something the hidden meaning of it. Let us look into the last chapter of the book wherein human history is depicted. It contained far more than a vague allusion to four horses and the riders of apocalypse of some kind of coming terrible events called Armageddon and if we look into the book diligently and with prayer the spirit of the Lord will give us enough wisdom to understand this so called fifth Gospel.

The incidents that occurred chronologically in the book are not impossible to comprehend with the grace of our Lord. According to the book fourth chapter Apostle John was summoned by a trumpet into the heaven in his vision. As per the vision the angel took him to a particular place and showed him the throne of God where He is seated. "The Father" is surrounded by beautiful sight, colors, sounds, and high order of angels in their duties. The person (God) seated on the throne is addressed and repeated 3 times as Holy Holy Holy. This three fold proclamation is the method of emphasizing the superlative of Holiness. The one sitting on the throne is also spoken as "Lord God Almighty" who was and who is to come. So what is attributed to Him are omnipotent and eternity. These two are called to His Holiness. The 24 elders sitting around the beautiful and well decorated throne of the Lord were worshipping Him with all their humbleness. They proclaimed with one voice "thou art worthy O Lord to receive glory, honor and power for thou hast created all things and for thy pleasure, they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). God Almighty created the heaven and the earth for His good and pleasure. He is omnipotent and eternal. He has every right and power to bring the earth and all there in to the consummation as recorded in the book of Revelation.

The truth is that the first two foundational doctrinal points upon which the correct understanding of revelation must stand. The most important point is that apostle John saw in his vision the scroll which was kept at the right hand side of God on the throne. This is called the second theological foundational platform upon which it is found in revelation chapter 5. Apostle John reminds all the readers of the book time and again that he saw the book (scroll) on the right hand side of God and father who was sitting on the throne. Though John was watching many things around the throne his attention was drawn towards the scroll only. The scroll has some writings inside and at the back. The historical and archeological information explains us that the scrolls were made up of some anti-lope skins. Those anti-lope skins were made smooth on both sides for the purpose of writing. The scroll John saw was sealed with seven seals. Many scrolls were exhibited in Jerusalem museum and most of them belonged to the first century AD. Among all the scrolls exhibited in that museum there was only one seal belonged to second century BC and it was called the Samaritan scroll. Generally each seal had the combined appearance of a piece twine lid around the scroll outside part of it and over the twine.

Then some paste was applied to keep these scrolls flattened. Before the clay hardened a brief message would be written on the clay itself. If the seal

breaks it is not possible to conceal the inside. All the seals were put in a line. On the outside of the scroll that is folded round what is in the scroll can be seen only after all the seven seals are broken. As John saw in his vision a strong and powerful angel came and proclaimed with a message regarding the scroll saying “who is worthy” (as the right or authority) to open the book the scroll and to loose the seals thereof (Revelation 5:2). The search for a competent person to open the book was said to be a proposal in scope. The search for such a worthy man would continue in the heaven, on the earth and beneath the earth and no man was found worthy to open the scroll by breaking the seven seals. This initial unsuccessful search for a worthy man caused the old Apostle John to cry uncontrollably and helplessly. If there is no worthy man in the entire universe to break the seal and open the book then everything was lost. The divine author St. John realized this truth finally.

Man was created to be king on the earth. He was supposed to rule the earth with instructions and able guidance from the Almighty God. But due to his disobedience he corrupted the earth and everything there in. so man and all other things on the earth remained in sinful condition. In such helpless position if the scroll was not opened and the contents not known to God’s people then it would be a great loss to the entire humanity. It was so surprising and unexpected that a strong angel warned the old apostle John with a commanding voice “Weep not” it means literally “Stop weeping.” John was weeping helplessly because he must have anticipated some calamity to the entire world if the scroll was not opened by a worthy man. Again the strong angel consoled him with the following words “Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David hath prevailed to open the book (scroll) and to loose the seven seals thereof” (Revelation 5:5). This opening of the scroll by a worthy man became the greatest need for the humanity at this critical situation. The Jewish nation and Davidic lineage were summoned to provide help for the world. Again John looked at the throne. This time he saw something which he missed at the first time and in his earlier description. Apostle John beheld in the middle, living beasts stood and in the middle of 24 elders a lamb which had been slain having seven horns and seven eyes which were the seven spirits of God sent fourth into the earth (Revelation 5:6-7).

Finally, the kinsman redeemer only the lamb was proved to be worthy to break the seal and open the scroll because He was slain and redeemed us to God by His blood and since we are redeemed we can reign on the earth. In

fullness of time the lamb is Lord Jesus Christ. He became a man to become our kinsman. Man was created by God to be king on the earth because only a man could redeem a man and his loss of inheritance. So Jesus is worthy to open the scroll as He redeemed us to God only by shedding His precious blood on the cross. As a result the heavenly choir of angels broke into unrestrained praise with the following words “Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory, and blessing.” And every creature which is in heaven on the earth under the sea such as are in the sea and all that are in them heard “I saying blessing and honor and glory and the power be unto them that sitteth upon the throne (God the Father) and unto the lamb (God the son) forever and ever” (Revelation 5:12-13).

As the first foundation we have to understand revelation that the Father has to receive the blessing honor and glory because He created the earth and everything on it then the second foundation is the Son He too has to receive the blessing, honor and glory because He redeemed the fallen creation with His blood. According to ancient Israel a man known as a god is attributed to kinsman or redeemer. He could redeem a family member or lost inheritance, etc. The first requisite qualification for a redeemer is that he must be a kinsman than he must be willing to redeem and then he must have the redemption price. If we consider all the above said points Jesus Christ came as a man to become our kinsman. Jesus was willing to redeem us. He had the redemption price as He shed His own blood. Jesus Christ as a redeemer and kinsman sported to break the seals and open the scroll. He began the process and continued throughout the book of Revelation. In that process the wicked men hypocrites, corrupt nations, counterfeit religion, the antichrist of first prophet including Satan will be banished from the land. This would be done during the day of the Lord. After finishing the preliminary work Jesus would establish His “Golden Age” upon the millennial kingdom.

Jesus Christ would start breaking the seals of the scroll that is mentioned in the sixth chapter of the book of Revelation. After the first four seals were opened there came out four horses with riders on them coming out with galloping speed onto the earth. Those four horses and the four horsemen portrayed as false Christ’s war famine, pestilence, and death. Those four riders started their riding during the first three and a half years which is called the tribulation period. And it is said the “Great tribulation” begins with the breaking of the fifth seal. It is also called “Jacob’s tribes,” which would begin at the midpoint of

Daniel's 70th week. The great tribulation is not three one and a half years in duration as popularly taught but it is cut short for the elect before the end of 70th week of Daniel with the breaking of the sixth seal. The opening of the sixth seal indicates cosmic destruction like the sun, the moon, etc.. There will be no light of both of them. The stars will fall down from heaven. The sun and the moon will be totally destroyed. The cosmic disturbance and the clear indication of the day of Lord is about to begin. This shows the direct intervention of God into the affairs of man on the earth to give His judgment. At the same time it will be the purging of the earth which was already defiled from the time of man in the Garden of Eden.

The six seals of revelation and the sixth chapter are a clear parallel to Lord's teaching on His second coming in His "Olivet discourse," on the Mount of Olives. This Olivet discourse also indicates Christ's wars, famines, great tribulations cosmic disturbances etc and at this point the rapture of the church will take place as the church is not appointed to the wrath of God. Then it is quite reasonable to assume all details of the seventh seal in these sequences in the seventh chapter but nothing is explained about it. As we find in the sixth chapter the six seals are broken but there is no mention of seventh seal in the seventh chapter instead it is said in this chapter that four angels who are about to hurt the earth commanded to refrain from that action for sometime and after all these things happened John said "I saw four angels standing at the four corners and holding four winds of the earth that means the wind should not blow on the Earth nor on the sea nor any part of the trees. And I John saw another angel ascending from the east holding the seal of the living God and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom the seal was given to hurt the earth. He asked them not to hurt the earth nor the sea, nor the trees till we sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

As we have seen already the sixth seal indicated cosmic disturbances and God's wrath to begin. There are a good number of passages in the Old Testament that expressed about the cosmic destruction with God's wrath and the future day of the Lord. It is clearly pointed out in the book that two things have to happen before the wrath of God. They are –1,44,000 Jews, 12000 from each tribe of the 12 sons of Jacob were to be sealed for protection at the time of the day of our Lord. The believers of the church who were not considered to God's wrath should have been repented. Therefore, a great multitude from all nations who came out of the tribulations were seen in heaven clothed with white ropes. They were all holding psalms in their hands and shouting salvation

to our Lord – and unto the lamb (Revelation 7:9-17). After, all these things occurred, there was a pin-drop silence in the heaven. It is said in the eighth chapter “And when he had open seventh seal there was a pin drop silence in heaven for about half an hour, is it not really wonderful that there was silence for half an hour in heaven?” Then what kind of silence that must be. We are not left without answer for silence in heaven. One of the Old Testament prophets by name “Zephaniah” wrote “Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God for the day of the Lord is at hand.” (Zephaniah 1:7)

So the wrath of God upon the earth will commence with the breaking of the seventh seal. It will be more devastating and dreadful event to imagine and those who were made to maintain silence in heaven must be the angels, the believers who were just raptured in the previous chapter and who were raptured in the eighth in prayer mode. When the seventh seal is opened the trumpet the judgment of God would fall upon the earth. It is the seventh seal that contained seven trumpets and out of seven trumpets emerge seven bowls (vials).

ISRAEL MADE A COVENANT WITH DEATH

Apostle Paul preached that “the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (1-Thessalonians 5:2-8). Israel made a covenant with death in complete desperation by keeping their backs to the walls of Jerusalem Temple. Paul wrote two letters to the church of Thessalonians during his second missionary journey to that place. At that time the Gospel message was taken from Asia Minor to Europe. Paul was wonderfully successful in his missionary work in that port city of Thessalonica. He preached for the Jews in synagogues and other people like non-Jews.

But in a short time there was some opposition for his preaching which forced him to leave that place immediately. Then he moved toward South to continue his meetings in the city of “Berea.” There also he was persecuted and after that he went to ‘Athens’ where ever he went the conditions were not in his favor. So he kept Timothy in Thessalonica to take care of the young church who came from Athens. Paul wrote two letters to Thessalonians in a very short time one after another to fill the gap in their theological understanding and to correct their mistakes which were already crept into their minds about some church members. Both the letters were written by Paul in 51 AD; probably the earliest of the New Testament writings. Some commentators were of the opinion that “Galations” was written even earlier than 49AD whatever may be the exact date, Paul happened to write those letters from the city of Corinth.

The main topic of both the letters is the second coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, there is no other book in the New Testament than the book of Revelation that gave enough information for the discussion regarding the second coming of Christ and other events connected to that. For our proper understanding let us look into the chapters of the 1 Thessalonians. and to wait for His son from heaven-whom God raised from the dead-even Jesus which delivered (literally who delivered) us from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10). In such circumstances what is our hope, joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

To the end he may stabilize our hearts inflammable in holiness before God. As written the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of an arch-angel and with the Trump of God the dead in Christ shall

raise first then we are all alive and the remaining shall be caught up together in the air to meet the Lord in the air, so that we shall be with the Lord forever.

Apostle Paul continued his writing about Christ's second coming even in the second letter to the Thessalonians. "And to you who are troubled because of severe persecution" rest with us when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. If any man does not obey (heed) our Lord by this epistle in contrast to Paul's word concerning the second coming, He may be astonished. Yet covenant him not as an enemy but admonish him as brother.

As far as we have understood in all the chapters of the two books of Thessalonians, we find that Paul concentrated only on preaching about the second coming of Jesus.

- 1) The first and second Thessalonians are considered to be the evident of Paul's wanderings.
- 2) They are written mainly for young and immature churches.
- 3) They are filled with practical exhortations for churches contemporary Christian living based on the second coming.

Paul thought about the second coming as a very important doctrine. It is necessary for the present day Christians as a reminder and practical in nature. According to Paul "Faith and Love" are like breast plate to a true believer and the hope of Christ's return is a "Helmet" Which is the most valuable to man. In the words of Paul, we may have to travel as believers a long distance with some obstacles in desert and the darkest nights with some danger ahead. Still we are equipped with a helmet and that Helmet is the blessed hope of Christ's return and nothing either in heaven or on earth can prevent the coming of Christ. After His coming the believers would be raised from death, and those who are still living shall be raptured. Then the believers shall be glorified and stay in heaven with God forever. It should not be a surprise to the believers that Christ's return is the Helmet.

The second coming of Jesus is no doubt a crucial and urgent doctrine. It is very tragic and controversial. So most of the Bible teachers hesitate to preach the truth of His second coming. Paul felt that a famine would come to the land, which is not of food, but hearing of the word of God. He taught about the second

coming in power and glory. But he had to cut short his preaching because he was forced to flee the city, at the earliest. The people of the church were living with full confidence regarding the coming of Jesus and also they felt unhappy at home about some who were not going to be saved as they died before the coming of Jesus.

Paul informed such people that they were ignorant of what would happen to those believers who died earlier. The persons who died in Christ would not miss the blessing hope of God and added that blessed hope would take away the sting of death and Paul clearly pointed out this secret. The Lord Himself would descend from heaven with a shout at the day of the Lord, with the voice of an arch-angel and with the trumpet of God as said in the Old Testament. The trumpet was blown in connection with..

- 1) Calling God's people into His presence and it would be appropriate in connection with the rapture to call the believers to the presence of God.
- 2) When the Israel would go to war under divine direction.

So, it is quite appropriate to blow the "shofar" at the time of out pouring of God's wrath and when He goes to war during "the day of the Lord," and the dead shall raise from the grave. Then those who are still alive shall be put together and taken on the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and they shall remain with the Lord forever.

This is considered to be the most important rapture text in the Bible. The primary question here is what would happen to the people who have died in Christ before His return? So, the return of Jesus, and the rapture became prominent for discussion. Apostle Paul was of the opinion that we are ignorant of those who had died in Christ. Then let us try to understand the inner meaning of the saying "the day of the Lord so cometh as the thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2). It is said eight Old Testament writers and three New Testament writers talked about this subject of the day of the Lord. This day of the Lord as a matter of fact is a very short period of time at the end of the age. At that time God will interfere in the affairs of man. The Day of the Lord is wonderfully depicted in the trumpet and bowl judgment described in the book of Revelation 8:9-11; 11:16.

The young believers were under the impression that the false teachers misleading them. We can find some difference in the expression of "the Day of

the Lord had come.” This we find in the New King James version; or has already come. This we find in the New International Version the Greek tense of the verb in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 is translated to mean “the Day of the Lord is at hand.” Then in the King James Version Bible the translation is the Day of the Lord shall be an hanging over the event that has to commence. Apostle Paul addressed the issue in the following way. “Now I beseech you brethren by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto Him” (by rapture)

The Day of the Lord is at hand has become a major issue, Paul declared clearly that they had not entered the Day of the Lord. He said there would be a “falling away” and an evil personage one called “that man of sin” is to be clearly revealed. Paul said those two incidents must precede the Day of the Lord. Let us see the main purpose of Paul’s using the two words “falling away.” The Greek word for this is “apostasea” And this is translated as falling away. By using the definite article it is called the “the falling away” or total abandonment of something or someone.

This is described and considered by some as the most powerful usage. The traditional as well as the technical point as looked at that the apostasy or the falling away was referred to those Christians who renowned Jesus Christ at the end of the age. This dictum (saying) is applicable to those that are mentioned in (1 Timothy 4:1-2 and 2 Timothy 3:1-9). If this statement is said to be correct, and if the believers certainly apostatizing then the doctrine of eternal security for the believers would be a false doctrine. But the matter cited above does not use the word of apostasy nor any body would speak what Paul has in his mind.

Moses said the gentiles need not circumcise their children nor follow the customs. Here one of the two times the word apostasy is used in the Bible. And it is used in the context of Apostle Paul asking Jews to abandon, the Jewish culture faith and customs. There might be some truth in Paul’s asking them to abandon everything that is abandoning of Judaism.

In what context Paul used the word apostasy in the same spirit. Dr. Luke used the word in Acts. He was speaking about some Jews who wanted to abandon the God of their fathers during the seventieth week of Daniel and the Messianic hope on the pretext of false religion (humanism) and false messiah (Antichrist). The future ascending of antichrist is anticipated in the Bible by the

post emergence of Grecian/Syrian leader Antiochus Apiphanes the scripture has illustrated the clear cut idea about the Antichrist in the three passages.

The (apocryphal) book of 1 Maccabees was not the part of the Bible, but is recognized by the Biblical scholars that it has possessed some significant historical background and importance regarding this man and his career. And also the first century historian Josephs was a main source of this infamous man, but it is the nature of Antichrist to defeat the surrounding nations with military power and annex those nations into his kingdom by introducing Hellenistic (Greek) culture into those defeated countries as Alexander the great did.

This Antichrist (or heathen ruler) would be under the impression that he is able to control all nations and make them speak Greek language, wear Greek patron of dress, and adopt Greek philosophy of life and above all worship regularly and in addition to all the people must mix with the population of his empire. That is the ultimate hope and ambition of Antichrist.

As history recorded Antiochus Apiphanes was confident of changing the Jews to embrace Greek culture and civilization and worship their gods. According to his confidence a large member of Jews entered into a covenant with Antiochus and willingly surrendered themselves to his demands. All these wonderful changes among the Jews were recorded in the first book of 'Maccabees'. As mentioned in that book, in the days of Antiochus some lawless men came from Israel and misled many people by saying, "Let us go and make a covenant with gentiles round about us for since we have separated from them; many evils have come upon us." This proposal was liked by everyone and some of them went to the king to tell him their opinion. Then he advised them to observe the ordinances of gentiles. As a result they constructed a gymnasium in Jerusalem for the purpose of Greek education.

While they were following gentile customs, they had to renovate the marks of circumcision and abandon the holy covenant of Moses. They finally joined with the gentiles and sold themselves to the evil (1 Maccabees 1:11-15) in the sight of Almighty God. This miserable "falling away" or total abandonment of the God of Israel by many Jews was specifically called the apostasy. The first Maccabees was continued in this way. In course of time some officers of the king Antiochus, who were enforcing apostasy came to the city of "Modien" to insist on them to make sacrifices. They were asked to sacrifice pigs to the heathen deity 'Zeus Olympus' And this act became an abomination to the devoted Jews to a great magnitude and also this pigs sacrifice was strictly prohibited in the

Mosaic Law. This heinous act made some Jews rebel against the authorities. One of the ancient historians also wrote the remarkable story of the king Antiochus about the Jews in his time about his life and how he ill treated the Jews.

The king then gave a proclamation that all people must become one by forgetting their customs. And this proposal was accepted by both Israelis and gentiles whole heartedly and idol worship started. With that the Israelites sacrificed to the idols and polluted the Sabbath day. The king sent letters through messengers to Jerusalem and other cities in Judah asking them to follow his customs which might appear strange in the beginning. He also asked them to stop burnt offerings, sacrifices, drink offerings in the sanctuary to defame Sabbath day and feasts to defile the sanctuary (temple).

The priests were commanded to build altars and shrines to sacrifice swins and other dirty animals to the idols and keep their sons unclean, uncircumcised. The priests were also asked to remain unclean in everything and never to observe, the Law of Moses. This is the authentic description of apostasy and total abandonment of the Jehovah the God of Israel. The covenant Jews had with Antiochus at that time will be the same covenant. These Israelites are going to live with Antichrist in near future.

So, the prophet Daniel spoke about the covenant in the following way “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” (Daniel 9:27) The peculiar circumstances which surrounded the king Antiochus were defilement of God’s temple, by forbidding everything, and the apostasy of many Jewish people were most conspicuous in the history of Jewish people. This is the reason why the same term apostasy is appropriately used for the same people (Jews) at the event to occur at the same place. (The temple at Jerusalem) The future day is described in this context, how many Jews were going to abandon the God of their forefathers and the Messianic hope in the same way.

The Jews did all that in the days of Antiochus Apiphanes in order to embrace the heathen religion and false Messiah. The events that were fulfilled according to history under the king Antiochus happened to be already recorded as prophetic events that are going to be fulfilled under Anti-Christ. In the “Olivet Discourse” the Lord Himself assured that His hearers were quite familiar with the events surrounding Antiochus and Israelites great apostasy. Let us see some more parallels in this connection between Antiochus and Anti-Christ.

1. Antiochus and Anti-Christ both entered into a covenant to protect Israelites. Regarding Antiochus it was written “In those days some lawless men came from Israel and misled many people by saying. “Let us go and make a covenant with the gentiles round about us for since we were separated from them many evils have come upon us.” Then the king ordered Israel to observe ordinances of the gentiles (1 Maccabees 1:11-13) and regarding Anti-Christ it is written and he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week (Daniel 9:27).
2. Though both of them made their covenants with Israel none of them have unanimous support. This truth is carefully stressed or pointed out in both 1 Maccabees and the Bible as the historians wrote in those days lawless Israelites came and misled many, many from Israel adopted the heathen religion and many joined. They did evil in the land. It is written about Anti-Christ. He shall confirm his covenant with many. This is the only occasion in the Bible where the covenant is made with many but this is not unanimous abandonment by the Jews. It is those Jews according to the Lord will flee into the wilderness at the outset of great tribulation (Matthew 24:15-22).
3. The Jews made the covenant with the king Antiochus and he sent his officials to ‘Modien’ city to force the people for the offering of sacrifice. Paul wrote about the Anti-Christ and future day of the Lord. “Let no man deceive you by any means” for that day shall not come except there come a falling away (apostasy) first and that man of sin (Anti-Christ) be revealed the son of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3)
4. At this stage Antiochus and Anti-Christ break their covenants. Antiochus, after conquering Egypt and Syria went to Israel and to Jerusalem with strong force. He proudly entered the Temple and snatched away the golden altar and lamp-stand (probably Menorah) and all the precious utensils (1 Maccabees 1:20-21). The Bible also gives the same information that Antiochus with his mighty hand polluted the Temple and warned the Jews not to observe their customs. About Anti-Christ it is recorded in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. Both of them break the covenant at the same place- the Temple.
5. Both of them break their covenants by introducing false god into the Holy Temple. Antiochus entered the city sanctuary with strong force. As per the history he set up an image of his chief deity. ‘Zeus Olympus’ was made in

the likeness of a man (humanism) and Paul wrote about Anti-Christ who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called god as if he sitteth in the Temple of God. (The deitification of man). The Lord Himself taught when He therefore shall see the abomination of deflation spoken of by prophet Daniel standing at the holy place.

6. In both the cases some Jews oppose the false religion and the result of that is many perish. Still many Israelites stood firm and decided not to eat unclean food. They prefer to die rather than to be defiled by the food and defame the holy covenant and they did so (1 Maccabees 1:62-63) while speaking about the future day the Antichrist seeks to get Jews to low down before his image but many will refuse. The Lord said “then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted and shall kill you and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake.” (Matthew 24:9).
7. This time the righteous Jews would escape themselves. Then Mathathias, the righteous priest, would cry out in the city with a loud voice saying. “Let everyone who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me.” The priest and his sons fled to the hills leaving all their belongings in the city. The other Jews who were seeking for righteousness and proper justice went down to the wilderness to dwell there. In the context of tribulation as mentioned in the New Testament it is recorded of a remnant. Then let them which be in Judah flee in to the mountains.
8. Now in the case of Antiochus and Anti-Christ many of the righteous Jews will die because they are unable to violate the principles of Sabbath. The historical facts during the day of Antiochus graphically portray what will occur in that future day. Those who were seeking righteousness and justice went to the wilderness to dwell there. (They were fleeing forced apostasy). At the end spirits worked upon their children, their wives, their cattle etc. then it was reported to the king by the officers that those rejected the king went to the hiding places in the wilderness. It was reported to the troops in Jerusalem also. As a result a battle took place between the royal Jews and the kings’ troops. When the Jews were questioned they replied, they were ready even to die, but they would not forsake the Sabbath day. They confessed in one voice, let us all die in our innocence (they refused to break the Sabbath) heaven and earth testify for us that you are killing us unjustly (1 Maccabees 2:29-37)

9. In this stage during the time of king Antiochus and Anti-Christ, many women and children would die. In order to stamp out Jerusalem and the worship of Jehovah the king commissioned that circumcision (an evidence of covenantal relationship) be abolished. This is also an historical proof. According to king's decree, women whose sons were circumcised would be put to death. So, those Jewish women who could not renounce the God of their fathers and keep the male children who were circumcised both mother and child would be killed.

Therefore in the ensuing future day the apostatizing Jews who believe that the covenant they are making will bring them protection from the surrounding nations. This we see today clearly what the Jews thought when they made covenant with Antiochus. In reality, what the Bible calls it, a covenant with death. "The Lord said and except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved." Prophet Isaiah in his condemnation and sarcasm wrote about the covenant, his people Israel will make in this way and your covenant with death shall be disannulled and your agreement with hell shall not stand when the overflowing scourge shall pass through then ye shall be trodden down by it(Isaiah 28:18).

The covenant of apostasy into which Israel would enter is spoken of in the imagery of spiritual infidelity and unfaithfulness. The reason for such thinking was that in their final day of unfaithfulness if they rejected their true Messiah they would naturally become intimated with false Messiah. Then the covenant to be made of Israelites with Anti-Christ is also referred to as a covenant with death. This apostasy would continue with many Israelites who involve within the nation and sign the covenant with Anti-Christ. But the Israelites do not know they sign on the covenant of death at the beginning of seventeenth week. By doing such a foolish thing they embrace counterfeit religion or humanism or deitification of man or counterfeit Messiah (the Anti-Christ) who offers counterfeit peace and solution to the Middle East deliverance.

As recorded the middle of that seventeenth week of Jewish apostasy, the Anti-Christ will break the covenant with Israel. Then the Anti-Christ will enter Israel with the pretext of protecting it. He deposes the forces to North and South of Israel. And then he will plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas (the Mediterranean and Dead sea) and in the glorious holy mountain (Mount Zion). Then only in the middle of seventieth week with the setting up

on his image in the Temple, the Jews will realize the true character of their identity that they have made a covenant with death.

In that future day, apostatizing the Jews will believe that the covenant they are making may bring them protection from the surrounding nations. Apostle Paul described the revealing wicked in this way. "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called god or that is worshipped so that he as god sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (2 Thessalonians 2:4). When this Anti-Christ is recognized by Jews, Paul was speaking of the time, and the recognition would be confirmed, the moment the image of Antichrist installed in the Temple in the middle of seventieth week. Then only Israelites can understand they have made a covenant with death.

The result is their shock becomes indescribable. Then it will become the most horrible story in the Bible. No wonder it is called "Great Tribulation" (Matthew 24:21) or the time of Jacob's troubles. The apostasy begins during the first three and one and half years of Daniel's seventieth week, and then in the middle of the week, the Anti-Christ, the son of perdition, the seed of Satan will be revealed to Jewish people. The apostasy and the revealing of the man of sin will occur inside the seventieth week, but not before it begins, the teaching of Paul is that Israel nation made its covenant will not be in a position to recognize the Anti-Christ, until the abomination of desolation occurs in the middle of the week.

Israelites would not have made the covenant with Anti-Christ if they have seen him and recognized him in the beginning. According to Paul the Day of the Lord's judgment must take place after the apostasy and revealing of the man of sin. Therefore, the second coming of the Lord, and the outpouring of His wrath, during the day of the Lord cannot start at the beginning of the seventieth week and that occurs at the very out set of the Day of the Lord.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit which is quite conspicuous should not be diminished to the limitations of His work in the Old Testament as claimed sometimes regarding the diminishing of the Holy Spirit ministry nowhere it is said in the scripture during the seventieth week. Such agreements are focused upon the Biblical texts. The present fullness of the Holy Spirit of ministry according to (Acts 2:32-33) rests on the resurrection, assumption and exaltation of Jesus Christ. They are historical facts. They are the assurance of the abandonment of

the eternal gift of the spirits. The restrainer is neither the Holy Spirit nor human government. There is restrained evidence to identify the restrainer.

As per the identification the restrainer is the arch-angel Michael who restrains until “he be taken out of the way.” To substantiate the fact let us look into the incident mentioned below.

- 1) The arch-angel Michael has been recognized as restrainer since a very long time by both Jews and Christians and even by some noted scholars. He is a special guardian in relationship with Israelites. According to the relationship he has with the Israelites he is called ‘Michael’ which means “your prince” (Daniel 10:21) of whom it is said he “holdeth” The Hebrew word is “Chazag” means “to bind” to restrain, so that Michael has a restraining power (hindering) on behalf and in protection of Israel.
- 2) In revelation chapter 12 it is mentioned about the war that will take place in heaven. It is briefly pointed out the war can occur in the middle of the seventieth week of Daniel and it is described in the following manner. “And there was war in heaven Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and the dragon fought and his angels. And prevailed not neither was their place found any more in heaven (Revelation 12:7-8). And when the dragon saw that he was East into the earth, he persecuted the woman (Israel) which brought the male child.
- 3) While thinking about the person who can hinder the Anti-Christ, Paul said, only who now letteth (hindereth), continue to hinder until he be taken out of the way. The word hindereth means “to hold down” and the phrase taken out of the way means “to step aside” or get out of the way. Therefore, who has the power of hindering the Anti-Christ will step aside. It means he will no longer restrain in the Anti-Christ and those the Anti-Christ is persecuting.
- 4) This Michael angel is depicted in the Bible as a person who will step aside, and the prophet Daniel explained the event in this way. And at that time, shall Michael stand up the great prince which (standeth for the children of thy people and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there a nation even to that same time (Daniel 12:1). It is to be recollected again. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace, between the seas in the glorious holy mountain. This is the reference to Anti-Christ who will

establish his headquarter between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea on the glorious mountain in Jerusalem and this will happen in the middle of the seventieth week at the time of desecration of the Temple and the erection of the statue (image) of himself. Prophet Daniel has said about the arch-angel Michael more than enough that he would stand up during “the time of trouble.” This unexpected time of trouble is referred to the “great tribulation” Daniel was informed that this great trouble was related to his people who were no other than Jews. This might be also called the time of Jacobs troubles (Jeremiah 30:7). It is during that time the arch-angel Michael would stand up.

And what must be the meaning of the statement “And at that time shall Michael will stand up” for stand up the Hebrew word is “amad” it literally means “stand still.” Michael the guardian of Israel had fought for saving his people, but now he would stand still or stand aside. That means he would not help, he would not restrain and he would not hold down. There are some more words used in the Bible in the place of “amad” with the meaning “to be still” or desist or “they stood still and answered no more (Job 32:16). I would like to give another example in this connection. When EZRA opened the book in the sight of all people (because EZRA was above all people) and when he opened it all people “stood up” (Nehemiah 8:5).

Rashe was called one of the greatest of Israel’s teachers. His Hebrew scholarship was unparalleled and he gave his wonderful commentary upon the above said words by saying that the people kept quiet (stood still) while EZRA was reading Torah. And Rashe wrote about (Daniel 12:1). The Holy one blessed. He said to Michael “you are silent” “you are defending my children.” The arch-angel Michael who was completely involved himself with standing for Israel will in the middle of seventieth week stand still, stand aside, cease to stand for her (Israel).

When the people of Israel totally rejected their true and living God, and refused the truth of God, Michael would stand on them strong delusion, so that they believe in the lie (that the false Christ as the true God) and accept the Anti-Christ. So, God wanted to punish Israelites because they believed only unrighteous god the Anti-Christ. It is His purifying judgment on Israel. That is why, Michael will no longer hinder or hold down the wicked one Leonwood a writer, in his book, “A commentary on Daniel” commented on the expression the breaking up of power of the Holy Spirit (Daniel 12:7). He wrote “The angel thus revealed

the reason for God's permitting the antichrist break the power of Jews. As the parallel passages indicate this power and resulting self-sufficiency of the Jews need to be broken so that the Jews can willingly accept Jesus as their own rightful king.

A close study provides proper reason for Michael stand still, he will abstain and will not fight for Israel Michael will be ceased to defend Israel at the time of the commencement of Jacob's troubles; and the parallel between the action of Michael is prophesied in the Old Testament. Then what is said by Apostle Paul in his statement concerning the restrainer in the New Testament is unmistakable. There is enough reason to believe that Israel's great apostasy and the consequent manifestation of man of sin cannot be far away. The events will signal the approach of the end of time and coming of the king of kings very soon. The blessed hope of the believers is the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Immediately after His coming prior to the commencement of the day of the Lord, He will resurrect the dead and rapture the living believers. Then in righteousness He will start the judgment of the wicked during the day of the Lord. One thing we have to remember that the days preceding his coming will be a period of great difficulty for believers. Even the church will not be spared from the persecution of Antichrist. In such circumstances we are in no way better than those who suffered martyrdom for their spotless faith.

As true believers we must be conscious of the difficult days ahead. He will soon and very soon descend upon the church. And we as staunch believers must be ready and anxiously await the coming of messiah.

WHEN DID CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE BEGIN

According to Biblical history Christian doctrinal beliefs and teachings had their origin in the Old Testament and continued in the entire New Testament. Actually there are some revelations of God in the scriptures through the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21). Today theologians are of the opinion that if we pray to God for some enlightenment on the doctrinal subject that means we are not praying for new revelation, which God had already revealed the prophets to the Apostles and to the original writers of the scriptures. But people have been praying for the understanding of what was already given. Then as Christians pastors elders of the church and deacons, we must give these Biblical teachings and facts for the proper application to our lives.

With the above said information, it is clear that some Christians might disagree with the teachings of scriptures. And today there are many denominations that testify the same. There are many reasons for that and some denominations are not at all wrong in their expressions because

- 1) Most of the church members are interested to talk on the same subject, while they are entering the church or leaving the church campus.
- 2) Those who wish to join the worship must know in advance regarding the beliefs of one another.
- 3) All teachings mentioned in the scriptures are not fundamental teachings. At the same time, the Word of God is not specifically given a clear picture of some items like – length of women’s hair, what type of communion to be used, what type of dress should be used by the church goers, what kind of music to be played at the time of service and the details of church government.
- 4) Some denominations came into existence due to historic or ethnic reasons. For instance the Swedish Christian population in Minnesota began a church only in late 1880’s.

Anybody can appreciate if we are loyal to our church, or to our denomination but we should not cause split or separation because God Almighty commanded us, “That ye love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12) and this is the main reason why we must love our fellow believers. Basing on this motto, we can love some believers, even though we have some differences

and disagreement about the doctrine. Some Christians realize the doctrinal part of differences with other believers but the concerned points have not been yet revealed to the congregation “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12)

God has clearly chosen not to make every detail of the church official are legal but gave His people a bit liberty to adjust with things depending upon the situation and time. One man establiseth one day above another, another establiseth every day alike. Let every man be persecuted fully in his own mind (Romans 14:5). Added to this, there are some more factors – there are some false prophets, some teachers who try to bring unbelievable rumours even by denying the Lord, that brought them up and finally bring upon themselves immediate destruction.

The apostles and elders used to join together at times to consider the issues. On one occasion when such agreement was going on Apostle Peter got up and addressed them brethren and said, God made choice sometime ago, that the gentiles should hear the word of God from the gospels through him and believe in true God. And God who knew their hearts, would like to give them the Holy Spirit also as He gave to the disciples, and purify their hearts by faith. In such conditions it is not necessary to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which is difficult to bear, either by their parents or by themselves (the disciples) Peter further said they believed in the grace of Jesus that they would be saved even as they (Acts 15:6-11). Some of the leaders of the first century gathered together when great doctrinal and other issues forced them for discussion. Today we look back and refer to them as they were made by the Ecumenical council.

God had a question that is whether the gentile converts should be under the law of Moses in connection with the settlement of church disputes and this pattern was called the first Christian council as we find in (Acts 15:1-31). That council was the gathering of all Apostles elders, and church leaders. They settled their church matters with prayers and discussion, but not with winning motive of a particular group. They settled their issues with spiritual consensus and the perfect mind of God. The apostles never said anything individually like, “I know more than anybody else” or “I only know what is good for the church.” They always looked for the mind of God through the Holy Spirit. They read the scripture, then prayed and then started discussion.

So, the church leaders followed the spiritual pattern, whenever they got any problem regarding the church in the first centuries. It is said, whenever the church leaders get any doubt to-day they look back and refer to those meetings called “Ecumenical council” and in Greek it is called “Oikoumene” which means the inhabited world. By the grace of God the persecution of Jews by the imperial Roman authorities was stopped by Constantine the first Christian roman emperor in December 312 AD. Then in 313 he proclaimed a decree of “Tolerance” and made Christianity a lawful religion throughout the empire.

At that time Constantine was the emperor to the eastern part of Roman empire, and his capital was shifted to Byzantin (tium) and later the name of that city was changed in to Constantine city and in Greek it was called “Constantine-polis” and finally it was called in later years Constantinopolis. This name again changed into Istanbul and today it is called “Turkey” with Muslim population many wonderful changes took place only during the reign of Constantine. All Christians after 250 years of persecution were freed. This persecution was actually started by emperor “Nero” in 64 AD came to an end forever.

Now Christians got freedom. They were allowed to preach their faith openly. They could read and copy their scriptures. Finally to reclaim their sacred sites in their Holy land Jerusalem to build their own churches and settle their doctrinal issues. The church of East mainly Greek speaking and most of them were gentiles. It was because of God’s sovereign authority the Holy Spirit gave Apostle Paul a vision of Macedonian who called him for help to know about God. So Apostle Paul started his 2nd and 3rd missionary journey and took with him “the gospel” which means the good news of Christ to the west, to the Greek lands into Europe. Many gentiles received the Word of God and accepted Jesus as their personal saviour. As a result of Paul’s meetings churches were established and spread into many parts of Roman Empire. Then the gospel went into South, North Africa, India and many other places.

Emperor Constantine had Greek background and with some purpose he moved the capital to Byzantium and as he was living in that city. It’s name was changed as Constantine city and finally Constantinople. This capital city became important Christian Center and so the Greek Bishops, and elders considered to be a body to solve different contemporary doctrinal disputes with the shifting of capital from Rome to Constintenoples. The faith of the king was increased and Christianity became acceptable religion to one and all. The emperor also made their religion legal and prior to that there was enmass persecution. The

moment Christianity was made legal faith spread among people like wild fire and the reputed scholars read the Holy Bible and began to write books on the Bible and discussions also continued.

During 160-225 AD, Tertullian of Carthage in North Africa was called the father of Latin Christianity. But the more suitable name to be called was “the father of Latin Theology.” It was also said that it was Tertullian who coined the terms like the Old Testament, New Testament and Trinity (Tri-Unity). In addition to this he provided basic understanding for the discussion of post apostolic Christian doctrine. Different questions were asked and all of them properly answered now a day’s but in the olden days, the believers could not have satisfactory answers to their doubts. Those people did not understand the nature and correct meaning of Trinity and also they could not have clear idea whether Jesus was God or man or both.

Some of the doubts they got were genuine and some false. The church of Christ which is like other churches, always looked for the correct doctrine without the suggestion of anybody a true believer who had faith in Jesus Christ as his personal saviour can undoubtedly understand the nature of Trinity and its hidden meaning. Since the believers have trust in Jesus Christ their sins will be automatically forgiven. As a result of that they would become the regular members of God’s huge family. The moment they became spiritual children of God, the Christian doctrine had to be taught to them in the correct manner basing on the current situation.

According to the historical information for the experienced people of God understanding of doctrine will be like the correction of strange teaching that has come to light all of a sudden. In such circumstances the wise men among us will try to alert the believers and make them understand that something appears to be wrong and unspiritual in this new teaching sometimes the fault is quite conspicuous even to the naked eye and other times the believers must have to study sincerely then pray and finally consider the ins and outs of the teaching in the light of the scripture.

If the teaching departs from the original scripture or add unnecessary ideas and not properly taught or not properly summarised from the Biblical text, such matter must be thoroughly checked. If the teachings are found faulty and if they are wrongly considered they must be bluntly opposed as false teachings only Gnosticism challenged Christianity during the first three centuries. The word Gnosticism came from the Greek verb “gnosko” (ge-know-sko) which means “I

know.” Actually it was not a single doctrinal mistake, but it was a spreading set of those who know the hidden or philosophical secrets in addition to Biblical teachings. We could also say Christians were common people whereas Gnostics were an enlightened people. This difference was found in pagan Greek and Persian beliefs along with other philosophies. This had nourished Hellenized Christianity and pushed further into Greek philosophic and pagan methods.

The above said people did not accept God's creation of the world (cosmos) but concluded some deity must have done that. They were under the impression that the creator of this material world must be a supernatural being who was just a subordinate to the Supreme Being. The Gnostics saw Jesus in different ways but disagreed on one point that is He had come as Messiah in the flesh. In this connection apostle John wrote in (1 John 4:3). “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God and this is the spirit of the Antichrist where of ye have heard that it should come and even now already is it in the world.”

The readers may be surprised how even false teaching could create positive impression and spread into many places. The main reason for the public popularity was purely the persecution of Jews by the Roman rulers between 64-312 AD a memorable era in the history of Roman regime and also some gnostic believers and then some part of New Testament were responsible to their bad luck. There were no readers or copies of the Bible or there were no Christian books to enlighten themselves the truth behind. As per the historical information it was the time only for oral teaching (teaching through mouth to mouth) was in existence. But some manuscripts were available to learned people, from the collection in the so called libraries. Regarding common people they could know the truth only through preaching's in the church, when they gathered for worshipping God.

Then fortunately in about 300 AD the wide spread teaching and preaching of the New Testament overshadowed the Gnostic propaganda and also silenced Sabellius to some extent. This Sabellius from Rome taught the error of Modalism in the early third century that the Trinity was only God's three models of appearance three costumes which the same God person wore at different times. According to Sabellius God wore three masks on His face and thereby came three types of dresses. We may hear different types of opinions about God, but the teachings of scriptures show of one God (Deuteronomy 6:4) but not three.

The suitable answer at this juncture is that in the Old Testament world, the errors of idolatry and polytheism were everywhere. On the other hand the scriptures emphasized the oneness of God head, but in the New Testament polytheism was a warning and new additional eternal truths were revealed, especially about Jesus Christ, who was an eternal son and the Holy Ghost. So, whoever reject the Trinity and say that there is only one God then we must be in a position to say we are after all human beings and so we cannot judge God and make rules. We know what He revealed in the scriptures, what He was and the purpose of His coming.

They might not be surprised of Godhead that is the Trinity which has become a complicated issue at that time. In such conditions, the Bishop of Rome 'Callirteus' came to lime light in 220 AD and excommunicated Sabellius for his illegal teachings about the Trinity. There was one more teaching of Sabellius that one God with three different costumes that the Father suffered on the cross which is known as Patripassionism. This statement was quite contrary to the words spoken by Jesus on the cross. This is one of the seven words that Jesus spoke when He was crucified. He said "My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me." (Matthew 27:46).

During 250-334 AD, Arius an elder in a church in Alexandria, Egypt in his teachings explained that Jesus was not a deity. He was just created in heaven or born on earth and so he was not eternal and divine. In this context we can look into the gospel of John first verse for the suitable answer to that issue two hundred years before Arius teachings. As John wrote "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God, and the word was God" the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him not anything made, that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of man (John 1:1-4).

As John wrote, "In the beginning" and the Greek translation from Hebrew is "Inarche" and no other words would replace the opening verses of Genesis. In Hebrew language also, these two words are in two words like "Be-resheth" which means 'in the beginning.' So Apostle John's gospel began with these two Greek words "En Arche." If we look into history, the translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek was started during the time of Alexander the great, with a team of 70 rabbis in Alexandria and Egypt in 270 AD and it was called "Septuagint." Following these words were John's affirmation of all that Jesus was the creator of all and in Him was the life. Every life on earth has

the eternal existence of Jesus as deity. Actually life is in Him. He not only speaks of life but also speaks about eternal life. He imparts everything as redeemer. John clearly pointed out that the word (Jesus the living the out word, visible comprehensive manifestation of the unseen Godhead) is God.

Generally, the young people show curiolity to know about great emperors, kings, presidents like Constantine, Justinian, Catherine the great of Russia, Queen Elizabeth of England, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln of USA, Mahatma Gandhi of India etc. Sometimes those young people think, they would become like one of them and achieve something in their life time when they come to age. They begin to meditate on how these leaders must have struggled for their survival. Sometimes by indulging in wars for the safety of their countries and how they have taken wise steps to rule their countries in a peaceful manner. And such people many times would have survived only by the providence of God but not with their own power and might. In the same manner Constantine after defeating Marentius in the battle of the “Milvian Bridge” in 312 AD became the sole emperor of the vast Roman Empire. Then he legalized Christianity inspite of struggles and rebellions everywhere in that huge empire.

Constantine had constant threat from the Northern Teutonic and Slavonic barbarian tribes invading the (frontiers) of his kingdom. In addition to that the king had internal problems with the legalized and rapidly growing Christianity. It was so threatening and he thought it might lead the division among Christians. It was primarily concerned to doctrinal struggle. His new rule had already forced a factionalism of (1) Latin West and Greek East. (2) There were some people who still wanted to be loyal to old pagan Roman gods, and on the other hand the rapid spreading of the new faith on Christ by majority of people. (3) The orthodox Romans of Rome, and now Constantinople, the release of new immigrants to the barbarians these things seemed to have caused the king to fear more that the Christendom would be divided, though he was the most powerful king of his time.

He did not care about the out side invaders, but worried more of his own people. The teachings of Arius became a problem as he was teaching that Jesus was not at all a deity and this was vehemently opposed by all Bishops of both East and West, who adhered to “Athanasius” who strongly affirmed in a thundering voice that Jesus was indeed deity. Having faced all these problems Constantine finally called for an emergency meeting of “Ecumenical Council” which was similar to that in Acts 15th chapter. For this extraordinary meet he

invited all the Bishops, elders, the theologians, learned men, and pious men to assemble prayerfully and solve the complicated issue and look for the will of God. He summoned all this hierarchy to come in 325 AD to the village of “Nicea.” It was about 50 miles away from Constantinople. The main purpose of the selection of that place was that they wanted peace and tranquillity and far away from all kinds of distractions of the city.

They were also called for another settlement of correcting the date of Easter festival. This became an unsolvable issue for many years for early Christian churches. So, Constantine wanted the settlement of this point too; so, that the division might not take place in the congregation. Then the council of “Nicea” set the date of Easter as a movable feast, because it would not occur once fixed calendar date each year like Christmas that occurs only on December 25th. They tried to set it some how close to Hebrew Passover which is based on “Lunar Calendar” (called Jewish calendar). Finally Easter festival was decided to be celebrated on first Sunday after the first full moon. After the “vernal equinox” (21 March). According to Jews calendar ‘Nisan’ is the first month, which comes in our calendar in (March and April) and the Passover festival comes to them on 14th of Nisan.

Next the greatest issue troubling the council at that time was teaching of Arius who openly denied the deity of Jesus Christ. Athanasius was the staunch and dedicated spokesman of the deity of Christ. At last the agreements confirmed as the scriptures taught that the Father was a person, the Father was a divine person, the Son was a separate person, the Son was an eternal divine person. In 381 AD, afterwards at the first council of Constantinople it was planned to make it clear that scripture also taught about the Holy Spirit as a deity in a Tri-Unity (Trinity). It was confirmed the Holy Spirit as a separate person and a divine person.

If we see the verses of (Matthew 28:19) the “Triune” Baptismal formula and in John 15:26 it was clearly mentioned that the father, the son and the Holy Spirit show the distinction of the divine persons. Following are the affirmation of “I am” including Christ

- | | |
|------------|--------------------------------------|
| John 8:23 | - I am from above |
| John 8:58 | - Before Abraham was I am |
| John 9:5 | - I am the light of the world |
| John 11:25 | - I am the resurrection and the life |

John 14:6 - I am the way, the truth and the life

Revelation 1:8 - I am the Alfa ad Omega

Revelation 1:17 - I am the first and the last

If we brood over these statements they would certainly elevate Him as far superior to status of a prophet or even perfect human Messiah. Then in 325 AD, a new creed called “Nicene creed” came into existence. It was as follows : We believe in one God, the father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the father (the only begotten that is of the essence of the father God of God), Light of light, very God of very God begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made (both in heaven and on earth); who for us men and for our salvation came down and was incarnate and was made man. He suffered and the third day He rose again and ascended into heaven. From thence, He shall come to judge the quick and the dead and in the Holy Ghost.

And to this decree, the following matter was also added in 381 AD by the council of Constantinople just for the purpose of affirming the deity of the Holy Spirit. It was not at all an issue in 325 AD, and the creed continued (the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the father, who with father and the son, together is worshipped and glorified who spoke by the prophets. In one holy catholic (universal) and apostolic church we acknowledge one Baptism, for the remission of sins. We look for the revelation of the dead and the life of the world to come Amen). The concerned authorities tried to add something more to this in 6th century AD but it was completely rejected and ignored by the eastern Greek Church, which was quite against additional alternations of the creed. The position of church councils during the later years was.

Synod of Hippo: North Africa in 293 AD approved the Old Testament Canon, and the New Testament canon with 27 books as we have already at present plus 14 later apocryphal books.

Synod of Carthage - 397 AD: It had declared the Old testament books plus only our present 27 books of the New Testament books that were canonized.

Council of Ephesus - 432 AD: This council openly condemned Nestorianism that Jesus was two separate persons (Man and God). It also opposed Relagianism that man is essentially good, and can be eligible for salvation.

Council of Chalcedon — 351 AD: This council had affirmed Christ's two natures as unmixed undivided and inseparable. Christ was truly God and truly man, one person with two natures.

The twenty seven books were written by apostles, who spent all their time with the Lord. The important disciples were Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and above all was Apostle Paul. Luke happened to spend some time with Paul in Ephesus when John and Miriam (Mary) were living there. Paul was called Apostle by our God Himself and his writings were apostolic and authoritative. Some scholars commented that without the works of apostle Paul there is no New Testament at all. Another appropriate name for the New Testament books is "Apostolicity". The true meaning is that every New Testament book was written by either an apostle, who knew the Lord personally or by some who were commissioned by God, or any other who must have travelled with the apostle like the book of Hebrews. It is said the Holy Bible was written with the help of the Holy spirit by 40 writers in 1600 years.

In the present days, if any believer is interested to know wonderful testimony, of the earliest Christians, about the genuineness and authority of our New Testament books he must try to read the Ecclesiastical history of 'Eusebius' Pamphilus "Baker Book House" 1966. The original Greek text was written in 350 AD, by Eusebius who was a great Christian scholar at that time. He happened to follow, Queen Helena mother of the Emperor Constantine to Israel in exactly 325 AD. Her main purpose of visiting Israel was to locate the sacred sites of Christ's life and some of the Old Testament writings quoted by Eusebius probably about the second century Christian writings.

It is said some people had strange opinion about Constantine. They thought that the king had destroyed some gospels which did not enter the list of canon and which he thought unfit for reading. But they were wrong. The fact is that the writers at that time took great pains to rewrite all the books on the parchment and they did not want to recopy such books which had only fiction value. It seemed there were many stories of fiction, especially about the early life of Jesus which was not taken for canon. For the purpose of information, the books written by Thomas and Mary Magdalene were not included into the canon. If we look into historical background, the early Christians contributed much for the modern Christians and even during the days of unscrupulous persecution. They suffered wholeheartedly and happily any kind of punishment for their faith on Christ. They suffered for Christ, but left for us a rich heritage of

devotion and true love towards one another which are the most requisite qualifications for a real Christian believer. They also contributed to us the sacred scriptures of the Word of God with great and orthodox theological understanding.

Some references

- 1) Canon-Official test of books.
- 2) Tertullian-was called father of Latin Christianity and also called father of Latin theology.
- 3) Arius-a church member in Alexandria, who taught in public that Jesus was not a deity.
- 4) Septuagen-Hebrew translation of the Bible in to Greek in 270 AD by 70 rabbis.
- 5) Athanasius-He strongly supported Jesus as a deity.
- 6) Nicene-In 325 AD itself a new creed had come into existence called “Nicene Creed” which must be like our present “Apostle creed.”
- 7) Another name for New Testament is “Apostolicity.”
- 8) It was also the same Tertullian who coined the words of Old Testament, New Testament and Trinity (Tri-Unity).

SOME BIBLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What is the Bible?
The Bible is the inspired word of God. It is His revelation to all people about Himself and His plan of salvation.
2. What is the meaning of 'testament'?
A 'testament' is a covenant (contract or agreement).
3. How many people are been inspired by God to write the Bible?
About 40 people.
4. How many years different people took to write the Bible?
About 1600 years.
5. What does Gospel mean?
Good News.
6. What is the main subject of the four Gospels?
The life and teachings, death and resurrection of christ.
7. Who wrote more books in the Bible?
Apostle Paul.
8. Which book of the Bible tells about the beginning of the church?
The book of Acts.
9. Name the new testament book that composed entirely the prophesies of future?
The book of Revelation.
10. What is the meaning epistle?
A letter sent by an apostle.
11. Which is the largest book in the Bible?
The book of Psalms.
12. How are people different from animals?
God created people in his own image (Genius 1:27)
13. How Did people rebel against God after flood?
By building the Tower of Babel to reach haven (Genius 11:4) and also to worship the sun god.
14. Why was it wrong for Lot to live in Sodom?
Because the men of Sodom were very wicked sinners.

15. Who was Melchizedek?

He was a shepherd boy. God first anointed him as high priest. Later he became the king of Salem, which is later known as Jerusalem. He is also called the king of righteousness.

16. By what miracle did Israel leave the land of Egypt?

By the miracle of the partition of the Red Sea.

17. In which book can we find the ten commandments?

In the book of Exodus, chapter 20.

18. What did Israel build to worship God in wilderness?

The Tabernacle or the mobile temple.

19. What must have been the main purpose of Israel's sacrifices and offerings?

To make atonement for their sins (Leviticus 5: 1-6).

20. How did God lead Israelites in wilderness?

With the appearance of cloud by day and as a pillar of fire during the night (Numbers 9 : 15-23).

21. Why were the 12 spies sent by Moses to Canaan?

To find out what type of land it was and to know what kind of people were living there (Numbers 13 : 16 -20)

22. How did Moses disobey God at the place of Meribah?

God told Moses to speak with a rock for water but he struck hard at the rock with his rod (Numbers 20 : 7 -13).

23. From which mountain Moses could see the promised land?

Mount Nebo

24. Who were the two men that left Egypt and reached Canaan?

Joshua and Caleb.

25. By what miracle did the children of Israel enter the promised land?

God stopped the flow of Jordan river when it was in flood.

26. How many times did Israelites march around the walls of Jericho ?

13 times – one on each day of 6 days and 7 times on the seventh day (Joshua 6:3-4?).

27. What miracle was seen when Joshua fought at Gibeon?

The sun and the moon stopped their movement and stood still.

28. Who was the baby boy that heard the voice of God speaking to him during night time?
It was Samuel (1 Samuel 3 : 2-20).
29. Who was called stronger judge than all other judges?
It was Samson.
30. What made the Israelites to prefer a king instead of a judge?
Because they wanted to be like other nations.
31. Why did God remove Saul as king of Israel?
For disobeying the command of God.
32. What happened to the kingdom of Solomon after his death?
It was divided into two as the Southern kingdom of Judah with two tribes and Northern kingdom of Israel with 10 tribes.
33. Why did Elijah ask God to consume the sacrifice with fire on the mount of Carmel?
To make heathens understand that Israel God is the only true God and there is no other.
34. Who were the wicked king and queen during the time of Elijah?
They were Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 21 : 4-5).
35. Who was the Syrian officer healed of leprosy by taking bath in Jordan river at Elisha's command?
Naaman (2 Kings 5:10 -14).
36. To whom God gave the sign of the sun moving backward to show him that he was healed?
Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:8-10).
37. Who was the Jewish woman that became the wife of the king of Persia?
Esther (Esther 2: 16,17)
38. Who was the man that lost all his possessions and health still remained loyal to God?
Job (Job 1: 7-22).
39. Who was called the weeping prophet?
Jeremiah.
40. What did Micah say about the birth of Messiah?
The Messiah would be born at Bethlehem.

41. Who were the first two people that worshipped baby Jesus?
Shepherds and three wise men.
42. How old was Jesus when he first started public meetings?
About 30 years old.
43. Who was a tax collector among the disciples?
Mathew (Mathew 10:3).
44. Who were the first 4 apostles Jesus called to follow Him?
Peter, Andrew, James, and John (Mathew 4: 18-22).
45. What do we call the first statement of the sermon on the mount which all begin with the word blessing?
Beatitudes (Mathew 5: 2-11).
46. What revelation of himself did Jesus give to Peter, James, and John on a high mountain?
Jesus was transfigured (Showed his glory) and talked with Moses and Elijah (Mathew 17 : 1-8).
47. Who were the three Jesus' closet disciples?
They were Peter, James and John (Mathew 17: 1).
48. What does the word "Golgotha" mean?
Place of the skull (Mathew 27:33).
49. When Jesus was crucified what happened in nature?
The sun became dark for three hours and there was an earthquake (Mathew 27 :40-51).
50. What gift was given to church on the day of Pentecost?
The gift of the Holy Spirit(Acts 2:1-4).
51. Who saw Jesus first after resurrection?
Mary Magdalene (John 20:1-18).
52. How could the women enter the tomb of Jesus?
An angel had rolled way the stone of entrance.
53. How many people were there waited in the upper room to receive the Holy Spirit?
About 120 people.
54. How many people were saved on the day of Pentecost by Peter's sermon?
About 3000 people.

55. What was the sin committed by Ananias and Sapphires?
They lied with the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3).
56. Why did God give the law?
To show all people what sin is (Romans 3:20).
57. Why should we wear all the armour of God?
In order to resist the attack of the devil (Ephesians 6:14).
58. The breast plate of Christian armour is?
Righteousness (Ephesians 6:14).
59. What is the spirit's sword?
The Word of God.
60. Why should we love God?
Because he loved us first (1 John 4:19).
61. What happened to John in the island of Patmos?
God showed him what was going to happen in the last days (Revelation 4:1).
62. Who is an apostle?
An apostle is a special messenger sent by God.
63. What is faith?
Faith is belief and complete trust in God.
64. What is called sin?
When we refuse to do God's will as revealed by His Word and His Spirit (1 John 3:4).
65. What is meant by redemption?
Redemption is the price Jesus paid for our salvation.
66. What is death?
Death is the separation of the body and soul (Luke 12:20).
67. Who is called prophet?
A prophet is a person whom God has chosen to speak for Him in a special way with the power of the Holy Spirit (Judges 4:4).
68. Who are called angels?
Angels are spiritual beings created by God (Hebrews 1:14).
69. What does prayer mean?
Prayer means talking to God.

70. What does repentance mean?
A changed mind, heart and direction.
71. What is the meaning of justification?
The moment we accept Jesus as our savior God will also accept us as if we had not sinned (Romans 5: 1)
72. How did God give us the Bible?
The Holy Spirit inspired the Holy men giving them both truth and words to write (2 Peter 1:21).
73. How long does the Bible survive?
Heaven and earth may pass away but my word will never pass way (Mathew 24:35).
74. What chapter in the Bible is called "Love chapter"?
1 Corinthians 13 chapter.
75. Who are called first four great prophets?
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.
76. What is a parable?
It is a story about familiar things which helps us understand the truth behind it.
77. What are the four important divisions of the Old testament?
They are law, history, poetry, and prophecy.
78. Which are the two books that tell about Jews?
After they returned from the captivity of Babylon, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah revealed them.
79. What according to the Bible is the beginning of wisdom?
The fear of the Lord (In respect).
80. What kind of worship does God like?
God wants us to worship Him in spirit and in truth.
81. What are the titles of Jesus of divinity and of humanity?
Divine son of God and as human son.
82. How many of the Old testament prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus in His lifetime?
About 300 prophecies.

83. What was the first promise of God to the savior?
God told the serpent that one of Eve's descendants would defeat him (Genesis 3:15).
84. What was the promise God made to Abraham?
God promised to Abraham that through his seed (descendants) all the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3).
85. What is the doctrine of incarnation of Jesus?
God, the son, became flesh and lived among us.
86. What is the importance of the doctrine of Jesus' virgin birth?
Jesus did not have an earthly father but he had supernatural birth. Jesus was both fully God and fully human (Mathew 1: 20).
87. Why did God instruct to call Mary's son Jesus?
By his natural birth Jesus could save his people from their sins (Mathew 1: 21).
88. What is the meaning of Jesus?
The Lord is our savior (Mathew 1: 21).
89. What is the meaning of Christ?
The anointed one of God (Acts 4:26).
90. What is the Hebrew word for the great word Christ?
Messiah (John 1:41).
91. What was proved by Jesus' resurrection?
He proved Himself the son of God savior and Lord (Romans 12:4).
92. What were the duties of the Old Testament priests?
To intercede with God for the people and offer sacrifices to atone for their sins (Hebrew 5:1).
93. What is the definition of "sin" according to 1 John?
According to John sin is disobedience (Transgression) to God's command.
94. What advice did Paul give to Christians regarding their behavior towards others?
Christians must live in harmony with others. They should not feel proud of themselves. They must associate themselves with the people of low positions. They should not be conceited (Romans 12:16).

95. What is meant by vicarious atonement?

Jesus Christ bore the punishment for our sins. As he died on the cross and if we accept him as our savior we do not get any punishment from God (1Peter 2: 24).

96. What is the meaning of intercession?

To pray to God for someone else (1 Timothy 2: 1).

97. Who will intercede for Christians?

The Holy Spirit and Jesus (Romans 8: 26).

98. What are the three main sources of temptation?

Satan, the world and our own evil desires (Mathew 4:1).

99. Whom does the Holy Spirit glorify?

Jesus Christ.

100. When did first God baptiz the believers in the Holy Spirit?

On the day of Pentecost.

SOME MORE INFORMATION ON SOME EVENTS OF THE BIBLE

1. Apostle Paul pointed out that three things would make up God's Kingdom they are – righteousness peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).
2. Jesus is the foundation and head of the Church.
3. The main purposes of Baptism in the Holy Spirit are – it helps us to know about Jesus Christ better. It helps to understand God's word. It gives us power to witness.
4. According to scripture Abraham was the first man who paid tithes from his income. He paid that to the first high priest Melchezidic who was also called the king of Salem.
5. The two important ordinances of the church are water baptism and communion.
6. The baptism symbolizes two things – the death of old sinful nature and a new life in Christ.
7. The millennium is that a future period of one thousand years when Jesus Christ will rule over the earth (Revelation 20:1-3).
8. Those people who accepted Jesus Christ as their savior and whose names are written in the book of lamb will have eternal life in heaven.
9. We do not find five things in heaven – they are tears (crying), death, sorrow, pain and sin (Revelation 21: 4-27).
10. The devil or satan was originally an arch angel created by God in heaven. His name was Lucifer. God happened to punish him because he tried to make himself greater than God (Isaiah 14: 12-15).
11. We have to accept at least four logical evidences from the following that the Bible is inspired. They are findings of archeology its unity, its endurance, its timelessness, its influence on people and nations many prophesies are fulfilled.
12. The first five books of the old testament were written by Moses. They are called Torah are Pentateuch.
13. There are 12 books in the old testament that speak about Biblical history. They are – Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel , 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.



To write a book especially in English one needs inspiration and invisible guidance. In the same way to deal with some incidents in the Bible, we need the divine inspiration and the Holy Spirit. Without God's guidance, and rather permission, we cannot write even a single word about Him. It is said about 40 inspired people wrote "The Holy Bible" in a period of 1600 years starting with Moses and ending with St. John and the last book being "The Book of revelation" that John wrote in 95 A.D. This book is very important because, it dealt with the life History of Jesus Christ. Some scholars called it "The Book of Seven and also fifth Gospel".

All the Biblical writers like Moses David Peter, John and Paul wrote their respective books only with divine inspiration. I somehow managed to complete the fourth book with countless blessings of God. As I dealt with the topics connected to the Bible History, some people may find interest to look into these topics and may God bless them and enlighten them.

In the fifth book "The Everlasting kingdom of God" the pathetic condition of king Solomon's Temple during the reign of twenty Judaic kings is described and also how Israelites made a covenant with death is explained. May this book enlightene the hearts of the readers. May God bless us all to aim for everlasting kingdom.

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14. The five books of history in the new testament are – Mathew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts.
15. The 13 epistles written by apostle Paul are – Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.
16. The true characteristics of a Christian are – patience to be kind, not to feel Jealous, not to have grudge, not to demand anything, not to feel glad about injustice, rejoicing in truth, and endurance.
17. The Christians can live victoriously over sin by yielding to God blaming their identification with death and resurrection of Jesus and allowing the spirit to lead them.
18. It is said whoever conceals his sins does not prosper but whoever confesses his sins and renounces them will find the mercy of God.
19. The last command of Jesus to his disciples was that they should not leave Jerusalem until they receive the fullness of Holy Spirit.
20. There are four commandments out of 10 that keep our relationship with God
 - i) You shall have no other God before me.
 - ii) You shall not make for yourself an idol.
 - iii) You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
 - iv) Remember the Sabbath day (Exodus 20: 1-11).