

Unveiled Mysteries Of Qumran

By

Rev. Dr. Sundara Rao Tsappidi MA., D. Litt.



The City of **Jerusalem** at Sunset

UNVEILED MYSTERIES OF QUMRAN

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SUNDARA RAO TSAPPIDI

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“HE SATISFIES THE LOVING SOUL” - Psalm 107.9

Foreword

Rev. Dr. Sundara Rao Tsappidi is a servant of God doing ministry through his writings for His glory. The Almighty God satisfies his soul by providing him another opportunity to bring out a wonderful book with the title “Unveiled Mysteries of Qumran”. It contains 14 articles and all these articles are unique of their kind with invaluable information regarding the Bible. Like the articles of the previous books, this book also provides a lot of information for the students and the scholars of the Bible. One such article is “The writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls”. It brings out many truths about the scriptures and their originality. It is the work of the scholars who did great research work and stated many things which are unknown to us.



Though Rev. Dr. Sundara Rao is shattered in health and with poor eyesight at the age of Seventy Nine, in an answer to his prayers, our gracious Lord enables him to put his efforts in this seventh book. His thinking is lateral and with this lateral thinking he sees the incidents, the men and the women in the Bible in a different angle. He has the Zeal to present more information about them. For example Mary Magdalene. The Bible provides little information about her. But here in this beautiful article we find her personal life, her longing for the Savior and her missionary work after the Resurrection of Christ along with the other disciples of our Lord. I strongly believe that Rev. Dr. Sundara Rao Tsappidi, with the blessings of our Lord, will bring out many more books of this kind for His Glory and for the spreading of the Gospel. May our gracious Lord bestow His blessings on him by providing sound health, knowledge and wisdom.

With best compliments.

The servant of God,



D.S. Sundara Rao,

M.A., M.Phil.,

Associate Professor of English (Rtd)
and Evangelist

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WHAT IS TORAH?

The word “Torah” in Jewish tradition literally means teachings. It is often used to describe the entire gamut of Jewish religious teachings. This Torah refers not only to the first five books of Moses, but also to the prophet’s Holy writings like Talmud and Midrash. That is to say to all the religious worship from the earlier to the present day. A part of five books are called Torah, and there are two more parts in the Bible. They are the books of the prophets (Neuiim), which consists of 21 books; and that of Holy worship or “Hagio-grapha” (ketubrim) which consists of 13 books. Following is the list of 39 books, of the Bible, the Old Testament.

1. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy (5 books).
2. The books of prophets - Joshua, Judges, I Samuel, II Samuel, I kings, II kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosia, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Zephaniah, Nehemiah, Habakkuk, Haggai Zechariah and Malachi.
3. Books of Holy Writings - Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiasts, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, I Chronicles and II Chronicles.

This Torah is the complete piece of Judaism and a key to Jewish survival. The role played by Torah in the lives of individuals differs from one another. The statement in Deuteronomy 3.3-4 points out that Torah is the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob’s which became widely accepted doctrine. It became a legacy of Jewish people. They took it into their hearts. They loved it. They passed it on for learning from generation to generation. According to some scholars, it was Ezra, the scribe of the fifth century, took the initiative for the detailed study of the Bible.

The most prominent of the early scholars, who interpreted Torah and made it a relevant living document were Hillel and Shammai of the first century C.E. The interpretation of these scholars and other contemporaries were recorded in the first part of the Talmud known as “Mishma”. The second part of the Talmud was known as “Zemara” and it was only a commentary on Mishma. Then Palestine or Jerusalem also created the second Talmud. The main source of information regarding the origin of the Torah was Torah itself. If we look

into the book of Exodus 19th chapter, it gives the following account. The Israelites suffered and humiliated as slaves for about 430 years in Egypt, and miraculously escaped from that with the guidance of God. They crossed the sea of Reeds, which is also called the Red Sea. There God told Moses that Israelites would be His children and a holy nation; if they maintain purity and steadfastness in their loyalty to Him. This loyalty has to be manifested by the observance of the Torah's commandments (Mitzvot) God called Moses to the summit of Mount Sinai, and gave him the Ten Commandments. He took them and came down to transmit them to Israelites. This is the most important and precious thing revealed from the Mount of Sinai.

Israelites, indeed, accepted Torah traditionally and wholeheartedly. God revealed Himself to Moses, and gave that Torah to the children of Israel. Then whether they accepted all of the contents, we have to see. As a matter of fact, the rabbis of Talmud offered full details of the Torah. Some believed that Torah was older than even the world itself. Since Torah was the epitome of wisdom, it is said that even God consulted Torah before He started the creation of the world. Some believed that Torah was a God inspired document and the truths in it were divinely. The rabbis said that it required three months to present the Torah to Israelites. The Bible indicated that the revelation took place in the third month (Sivan). This time was required for the enslaved Israelites to get prepared to accept the Torah and follow the commandments.

Some Jewish mystics believed in the special astrology significance in the appearance of the third day of the third month for the appearance of God on the Mount Sinai. Most of rabbis of the Talmud were strong believers of astrology and they saw special meaning in the chapter 19 of Exodus. This particular chapter emphasised the importance in the third day of the third month. It was the most auspicious day for Israelites as they escaped from the bondage in Egypt and marched toward their promised land. It was also the day of Passover which they celebrated it as a festival later.

This third day of the third month according to Hebrew calendar, (falls in May-June in our calendar) was chosen by God Himself, His physical appearance on the sixth day of the month for the revelation of the Torah. It is also specified that Torah does not belong to the children of Jacob alone (Israel) but also to his twin brother Esau, and finally to all humanity. It is presumed that Torah was

presented to Israel on Sabbath day because number seven and three play very prominent role in Jewish law. These two numbers used in the book of Torah are important and auspicious. The Talmud described as “All agreed that Torah was given to Israelites just on the Sabbath day; and the rabbis proved it by quoting the Bible from Exodus 20.8 remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy”

Here, the word ‘day’ is emphasised and also in Exodus 13.31 remember this day on which you came out of Egypt. The rabbis prayed for some time, because God gave to the children of Israelites only in the desert of Senai but not in their promised land. They came to a conclusion regarding the intention of God. They felt Torah was not only for the Jews but it was for the entire humanity. The intention of God was expressed with the presence of Abraham (Abram) in Genesis 12.1-3, where in God asked Abraham to go to different places and speak about His name and for that achievement Abraham was rewarded with abundant blessings. In Genesis 12.1-3 God also made a covenant with Abraham that he was entrusted to go through out the land and spread His name throughout the world. In Jewish understanding, a covenant is treated as a permanent link between the past and the present. The outcome of it was the Jews who would never be dissolved and they remain together under its umbrella; since they were the seed of Abraham. It was later called the “holy seed” and the people of holy fellowship; and also they were called the covenant people. Mount Senai where the revelation of Torah took place had its names. They are the names of different places in that desert.

1. Tz in - God announced His commandments there. The name “etzin” is connected to “TZIVOV”, which means He commanded.
2. Kadesh - because Israel was sanctified there. The word Kadesh is connected to the word, “Kodosh”. Its meaning is holy, sanctified.
3. Kaadmut - It was called so, because the Torah which was in existence from the time of creation at last revealed here. The name Kadmut is connected with the word “Kodem” or “kodema” which means early ancient.
4. Parn - The people of Israel had increased. This word is connected with “paree” which means they multiplied.
5. Simai - It was there that the hatred of God toward heathens began. This word came from “sina” which means hatred toward idolaters.
6. Cherev- (Horeb) because heathens were decreased there. The name “cherev” is connected with “churba” or “churban” which means desolation or destruction.

Moses remained at the top of the Mount Senai with God to receive many things. They were the Ten Commandments, and the complete Torah was communicated. This included the Pentateuch. It was also written law; Torah, “she bechtav” and its community the Talmud which is also called oral law. Just as the rabbis believed that God had chosen, the Mount Senai for His revelation of Torah, Moses was chosen as the transmitter of Torah for the entire humanity.

Prophet Moses was called the law giver, emancipator and its greatest prophet in Jewish history. And according to the Bible it was he who received the Ten Commandments directly from God. Palestinian Jewry Yo Chaman of the first century said that Israel was not chosen by God to receive the Torah. He added God offered Torah to every nation, but the people refused to accept and then He offered it to Israelites and they accepted it including the God. As mentioned in the ancient traditions the green colour was associated with Torah. According to history Mount Sinai was once full of green trees the synagogue with green Magi “Shavuot”. But this information was not approved by some people. They recognized the use of greenery for the houses and the church. This green colour is a symbol of birth and growth of Christianity.

This custom of using trees and wreaths widely spread in Christian homes. And this greenery was also introduced in the churches on Pentecost Sunday which is to come just fifty days after Easter to symbolize new growth. It is also called white seventh day and people would go to the church with white robes especially for taking baptism and that whiteness is the indication of forgiveness from sin. Gradually Torah was symbolized as the “tree of life”. So today all the synagogues are decorated with greenery. As mentioned in the Talmud Moses did not write Deuteronomy but Joshua, his successors wrote. Some other Talmudic scholars expressed their opinion, and they said God Himself declared the whole Torah to Moses and with divine power wrote everything inducting his death. And during the second century, a Jewish philosopher by name, Philo said that the spirit of God enveloped Moses and he foresaw his death, It could also be seen in his writings. With that God given spirit, Moses could give all details of his last days in the book of Deuteronomy in chapter 34.

Kabbalists in sixteenth century became fond of probing every letter and word of Torah While doing so they found in Exodus 12.37, as the adult Israelites freed from Egypt were 6, 00,000. The kabbilists concluded by saying this

information which was also useful for the interpretation of every word in Torah. That is to say every word in Torah has 6, 00,000 faces. This interpretation was first expressed in the Talmud by a Rabbis line. Some scholars like Spinoza questioned the literary side of the Bible, as they belonged to the scholars of Higher criticism. But they were refused by traditionalists, who said Torah was a divine gift. One of the major issues of the higher criticism was the composition of the Bible itself. It did not accept the authorship of the Bible, primarily the book of Exodus by Moses. As explained in detail the first five books of the Bible, were the collections of matter through various sources, and composed as book and completed only at the time of Ezra the scribe in the middle of the first century B.C.E.

In course of time, the documentary theory was also proved not correct in their assessment. For example, there were a good number of contractitory statements regarding the flood of Noah in 5 to 9 chapters in Genesis. For instance Genesis, 6.19 it is said that Noah took one pair of all animals into the Ark and in Genesis 7.2 it is pointed out seven pairs of all cleaned animals and one pair of unclean animals should be taken into the Ark. Then in Genesis 7.17 and 8.6, it is said that the rain water flooded the earth and remained for forty days where as in Genesis 7.24, it is mentioned as the rain water remained on the earth for 150 days. In Genesis 8.8-12 it is pointed out that Noah sent out a dove to see whether the flood water had receded or not. Again it is written in Genesis 8.7; Noah sent a raven to see the condition of water on the earth.

Most of the traditionalists rejected the documentary theory, and believed all the contents of the Bible. In spite of some anachronisms and inconsistencies. The traditionalists were not interested to explain every inconsistency and other statements found in the Bible because some of them were beyond their comprehension. While studying the Bible the traditionalists are advised to follow the under mentioned :

1. The Bible did not follow the correct chronological order what is explained in detail earlier must have happened later, or any incident that is mentioned later must have happened earlier.
2. The Torah is in the language of man, therefore words and concepts must not be explained scientifically.

There are two letters E and J used by the Higher critics to identify two types of Documents of which Torah was composed. The word J stands for the English word “Jehova” and it is said in Hebrew as “yehova”. But the Jewish people were banished to use that word as it was connected to God. Another word “Adonai” was used. The next word “Elohim” was used in Torah for God, particularly in the book of Genesis. So both the names “Adonai” and “Elohim” were used for God.

The teachings of Torah and the tradition of Jewish people were directed to encourage them to achieve a position of holiness. If we look into Leviticus chapter 19.2, it is said “you shall be holy for the Lord your God holy” and also, you shall believe my commandments diligently, I am the Lord, you shall not profane holy name that I may be sanctified in the middle of the people of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctifies you from the earliest days. Torah was used in the public. Synagogues handwritten parchment and in course of time that system became a law. The instruments of metal were not used in the synagogues. Each of the books of Moses retained as individual handwritten scroll.

The Rabbis passed a resolution so that the Torah was not allowed to be read in the public because the scrolls that were written incomplete would be less holy, rather than the scrolls contained a few books of Moses. If the incomplete scroll is used, it would show disrespect to the congregation. Jewish law was established degrees of sanctity and it could be applied to the religious articles. The Torah scrolls for their sanctity were treated as the highest and so no other object shall be put on it. The principle of Jewish law, followed here was first found in the Talmud. One may elevate the sacred articles to a higher degree of sanctity, but one may not lower them.

According to the impression of the Rabbis of the Talmud, the Torah must be carried only with right arm, whenever it was passed from one person to another. It must be on the right hand side only. The code Jewish law, specifically pointed out that one should not touch Torah with bare hands, but there is no correct proof for that. The Torah reader must use a Torah pointer to touch the parchment. A woman in a ritual impurity was not allowed to touch or kiss the Torah as she would touch or kiss “Mezuzo” which contains a parchment written from the Torah. It is a regular custom, among the non Jewish communities, the children and elders used to form in groups and visit the synagogues. Their purpose of visiting synagogues was to know and understand the Jewish customs and

traditions. Torah scroll was often removed from the Ark, so that the visitors might inspect it. Some rabbis in Babylonian Talmud, explained their view point that Mezuzot could be written in any language, but Torah must be written only in Hebrew language. And other rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel said that Torah might be written either in Greek or Hebrew. The Palestine Talmud gave its explanation why it was permitted Torah might be written in Greek also. The reason is because Greek is a rich language and also a classic.

The translation of scripture through Greek would provide honour to the Torah and it might be helpful for the propagation of the message, it is believed. The earliest Jewish record showed how the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek. It was found in the Antiquities of the Jews by Flavius Josephus, who lived in Jerusalem and Rome during the first century C.E. The Greeks called the translation of Torah, “Septuagint” which means “seventy”. The Jews again translated that word into Hebrew called “Tagurrl Ha - Shivim” which means translation of seventy. Actually seventy two persons were involved in the translation work.

In the later centuries, the remaining part of the Bible was also translated into Greek. Then the term “Septuagint” was applied to the entire Bible, although it was referred to the part of Torah only previously. The Torah was an inheritance of the children of Israel (Jacob). Keeping this in view many Jews opposed; when Torah was taught to the Gentiles also whenever the Torah was taken in procession toward synagogue, the congregation had to pay due respect to the scroll by touching the Torah with a prayer book and then by kissing the object. The origin of the kissing custom they might have found in the “song of songs” book (3.11). As per the references, the Jewish people are portrayed as a bride and God is portrayed as bridegroom.

Torah is the holiest and the most regal object in the Jewish history and therefore it became necessary to adore the book with the symbol of royalty and a crown. There are three crowns - the crown of law, (Torah) the crown of the priest and the crown of royalty. But the crown of good is above all. The crown was like a beautiful ornament to Torah. The book of proverbs 3.18 is referred to the Torah as the “Chayim” which means a “tree of life” Because of this uniqueness, the ends of parchment of the scroll were attached to the ends of the wooden rollers. The Torah pointer is referred to in Hebrew as “yad” which means “hand”.

It may be wooden piece or metal but the size of it must be six to eight inches long. This Torah pointer was originated in Germany in sixteenth century. If any mistake is found in the Torah scroll, that must be corrected within thirty days. The number eighty five was selected because of verses 35 and 36 of the book of numbers contain a total of eighty five letters. If any Torah becomes old and shabby because of many a correction it has to be buried at the earliest in a cemetery. In olden days, the Torah had a special room in synagogue. The Cairo, "Geneva" (means a place to hide) was the most famous place for storing such things. That storage room was at the upper floor of Ben Ezra synagogue in "Fortat" old Cairo.

According to the traditions of Jewish people, Torah scroll is equated to human being. It is natural to bury the human body after death. In the same way the Jews used to bury the Torah scroll after it becomes out of use. Other sacred writings like prayer books, or Talmud would be also given the same treatment as the Jewish people gave to the unused Torah scroll. It has been a regular custom for the Jews to tear their garments over the death of a relative. In the same way, those people would tear their garments, when a Torah was consumed by fire. Judaism has a stronger tradition of treating a poor man as a dead man.

The Ark was also called the Ark of covenant. It was most precious and important one to Jewish people. It was built and carried, along with the Tabernacle at the foot of the Mount Sinai. This Ark represented God's holiness and presence. So, the Israelites always carried it with due respect. The sentiment of the Jews was that whenever they prayed they turned their faces towards Jerusalem temple. According to the Palestinian Talmud, if there were nine adults and one minor was added to that, it would become ten with Torah and then further proceedings continued. But the Babylonian Talmud says, if there were nine adults present, the Ark would be treated as tenth and the service would be continued as usual, so the ark is treated as the holiest object and the Jews never permitted to sell away the old Torah scrolls for any amount though that amount would be used for the construction of other Synagogues.

The ark was always covered with a cloth and they preferred Blue, purple and maroon coloured cloth for that purpose. During the holidays or high holidays the covering of the ark, and the Mantle of the Torah, would be changed and put white cloth, because white colour is the symbol of purity and hope. It is linked

with one of the famous prophecies of prophet Isaiah (1.18). If your sins are like crimson colour they can turn into snow white. The meaning here is that man can be changed and God would redeem him. The Torah scroll is the holiest object kept in the synagogue, where as the ark is the second holiest thing. The Talmud rabbis insist more on the congregation members to keep standing when the ark is opened and the Torah is exposed. As mentioned in the Levities 19.32, “you shall rest before the aged, and show defence to the old”

According to one tradition God commanded Moses to involve the whole nation in the construction of the ark of covenant, So that all of them had a share in the Torah. The eternal light “mertamid” that burns continuously over the ark was introduced in the eighteenth century. The original internal light was part of the seven branched Menorah that was when prophet Amos (3.8) said “when a lion roars who will not fear?” The lion is the symbol of strength courage and majesty. It is mentioned in the Bible more than any other animal. When Jacob was blessing his sons before his death, he predicted about their future. He compared his fourth son Judah to a lion (Genesis 49.9). By the time Canaan was divided among all Israelites, Judah became most powerful, and important person from the twelve tribes, King David was from the tribe of Judah. Prophet Israiah and Nehemiah were also from the tribe of Judah.

Basing on the wonderful history it is understood that the characteristics of the lion like courage, strength and majesty must have been associated in the Torah which is the most important part of Jewish people. The Star of David was called “Magen David” literally means “shield of David”. According to one tradition of Jewish history, King David used six pointed shield in the battles, but it was not mentioned in the Bible. It is said the Star of David was kept in the synagogue about 1,800 year ago. But we can see his tomb even today in Jerusalem covered with blue cloth. For the first time the Star of David’s emblem appeared in the sixth century in Italy on the Tombstone. After that the Magen David could be seen on a variety of religious articles including arks and Torah mantles.

People must have used either reed or quill for the purpose of writing the Torah scroll and they should have taken that quill from the kosher fowl. The ink they used was specially made for writing. The parchment on which Torah was written must be from the hide of the kosher animal. Generally, it was the work of a scribe. So, he would be entrusted with the sacred work and he had to immerse

himself in a ritual bath before commencing such sacred work. Before the start of the work, of writing, the new scroll, he had to declare, "I am writing the Torah in the name of its sanctity and in the name of God in its sanctity".

The Hebrew word *sofer*, (the plural word of *soferim*), which means "one who count". The Talmud informs us that some of the early scribes called *saferim* used to count letters, words, and verses of the Torah. According to one tradition on Yom kippur, the priest would read from the Torah, which was kept in the temple. The scribes would safe guard the old scrolls when they wanted to write a new one. For the Jewish people Torah scroll is highly sacred, and so the writer must follow all the formalities before starting to write. Then regarding the parchment the scribe must make it durable and smooth.

The cleaning and softening method of the skins of the animals has been changing from time to time. In the present days, animal skins are softened by soaking them in the water for a couple of days. When the skin is prepared for writing the scroll of Torah, the conning must be done as quickly as possible, by a Jew, and then only the parchment could be used for writing the Torah. The scribe might write the scroll of the Torah, on the hide of any domestic or wild animal. Instead of writing the Bible books in the form of scroll the first century CE, they were written on the sheets of parchment stitched together and rolled up, there by it became very convenient to write in codex form.

During the time of Talmud, (the first five centuries CE) the scribes used pieces of wood or reeds as pens. The codex Bible format was preferred by the new emerging Christian church. This codex Bible was very common in the fourth century and used by both Christians and Jews. The Talmud says "If a scroll cannot be covered with a cloth, What is written inside would be spoiled in course of time. And the Jewish law established a rule that the height of the Torah scroll and its circumference must be equal. Many of the scribes followed the old established tradition. They used to begin every column, of the Torah scroll with Hebrew letters. Vav. In the Bible God's name is referred to with seven names - Yehova (Jehova), Adonia, EL, Etoah, Elohim, Shaddai and Tzevaot.

The method of reading the law was recorded for the first time in (Deuteronomy 30.10 - 12). Prophet Moses, after the words of Torah instructed the priest in the following way. At the end of every seventh year, (the shemita

year) at the feast of booths Sukkoth, you shall read this Torah aloud in the presence of all Israelites..... That they may hear and so learn to respect the Lord your God and observe faithfully every word of this Torah. Even though the Jewish tradition considered the whole Bible as sacred, and the word of God, the first five books of Moses called Pentateuch were believed as more sacred than the books of Prophets and the Holy writings. Then the reading of Sabbath Torah differs from week to week. But on the whole, the Sabbath reading was more than any holiday reading. The custom of people standing while reading Torah was going on as it had its origin from the time of Ezra. It is said, "And Ezra opened the book in the presence of all people and when he opened it all people stood up Some scholars certified that people must stand when Torah was read. The person who was assigned to read Torah for the congregation was called Baal (Koray) which means master of the reading.

The Torah was not read in public prior to the return of exiled Jews from Babylon to Palestine in 520 CE. On certain occasions, only the king, elders and high priests read it and the congregation listened to it. The time of reading the Torah was reserved for some illustrious persons of the community and for that purpose seven Torah honours were awaited on each Sabbath. The first to be called for reading the Torah was a priest the second was Levite and others were the members of Israelite community.

The Talmud socially said that a minimum of seven "aliyot" are to be awarded in a Sabbath. As mentioned previously more honours have to be distributed on a Sabbath than any other. The Sabbath day is the seventh day of the week, and also holier than any other day in the Jewish calendar. The number seven played a very important role in the Bible because even God took rest on the seventh day after creating the universe for six days. In addition to that both festivals, the "Passover" and "Sukkota" were declared to be seven day festivals. In the book of Deuteronomy it is said in 31.10-13 that at the end of every Sabbath year, the Torah was to be used for the children of Israelites.

There is no authentic information in the Bible why God has chosen Aaron and his family members only and assigned the important work of priesthood. They were kept in charge of the ark. As written in the book of Deuteronomy (10.8), when the Israelites were in the desert, God separated Levities and assigned them, the task of carrying the ark along with them whenever

they went to minister about Him. The sixth day was also important in the Bible, because God created the universe in six days including man and completed the task of creation. So it is a sacred number in Jewish tradition. Reading of Torah was treated as a form of study. And studying Torah is a divine commandment.

The meaning of the Hebrew word 'Gelila' is rolling up. The person who used to roll up the Torah scroll is called Gelila. On Sabbath morning who is called Master who claims seven blessings, two in connection with Torah reading and five in connection with "Haftara" of the five blessings. One is recited before the prophetic person, and the remaining four, upon his conclusion. Those seven blessings are also recited by a master on the festival occasions and on unexplained reason. They were not made to correspond to the number of seven awarded on such occasions. The Hebrew Bible used today is known as (Mosorate) text. And today's text is the result of a process which began in about 2600 years ago with Ezra, the first scribe. As clearly mentioned in the Jewish traditions God gave to Moses on the Mount Senai not only the Ten Commandments, but also the entire contents of Torah. God dictated that word by word.

Then the rabbis (who taught that Torah was) transmitted this Torah to Joshua, then Joshua to elders, the elders to the prophets and the prophets to the members of Great Assembly. Torah was studied by the later generations believed to be the same original one that God gave to Moses. The opinion of the other tradition was that the Torah of Moses was unknown to people, for many centuries. Since the time of revelation at Mount Senai in about 1250 BCE, till the Davidic Dynastic ruler Josiah, during seventh century BCE. For about 600 years, nobody talked about the whereabouts of that Torah scroll.

So, at the time of King Josiah, the copy of Torah was found in the Temple while some repair work was going on. This incident was mentioned in the Bible, in the second book of Kings 22 chapter. This Torah was discovered by the High priest of the Temple "Hilkiah" at that time. Then he told this to the scribe Shafan and Shafan to the king. The king in great excitement called all people and read the Torah for them. People could not come to conclusion about the Torah, used by Egyptians. It was a theological one that God dictated to Moses. The Talmud referred to many copies of Torah that remained at that time. But the Torah scroll read to the people by that High priest the Yom Kippur was considered the original one of Moses. Therefore, the scroll was known as the

“Azara” scroll (Sefer Ha-azara) also called Ezra scroll (sefer Ezra). It was an official Temple scroll. When the Romans conquered Jerusalem in 70 AD a copy of the parchment was removed from the Temple by the commander of the army “vaspasian”. Later he took it to Rome and kept it in the royal palace.

In the year 220 CE, Severus, the emperor of Rome built a Synagogue to the Jewish people and brought back that codex from the royal palace to the new Severus synagogue. Since that time the codex was continued on his name. The reading of the Talmud was that the Torah scroll was brought for the public reading. It was pointed out by some scribes to keep proper space in the book as opening and closing sections. The Torah scrolls used for the public reading at present are written in the same manner as that of the earliest times. “Rabbinic Bibles” is the English term and in Hebrew literature it is called “Mikraot Gedotot” which means literally “Great Bibles” or “large Bibles”.

The first Rabbinic Bible was edited in 1509 by an apostatic Jew “Felex Pratrovessus”, the son of a rabbi and the Bible was published in 1571 by David Bomberg a Christian printer. The Torah comprised of five books. In the days of the second Temple, almost middle of the fifth century BCE, Ezra the scribe introduced a new system of reading only some selected lines from Torah. They were to be read aloud to the public. This method continued for centuries. But during the third and the second centuries the Syrian - Greeks happened to rule Palestine and the public reading of Torah was banned by the authorities. Then reading some verses from the books of prophets was introduced.

For every holiday special sacrifices were brought to the Temple. And those offerings were in addition to two regular sacrifices on every day. Those additional sacrifices were called “Musafim”. But after the Temple was destroyed, in 70 CE, there were no such sacrifices. If we go back to the Biblical history, we can find how the Jewish people celebrated the New Moon holiday. It was not a full holiday to be absent from the work.

The Sabbath that comes immediately after Purim festival is called Sabbath “Zachor”. The meaning of that is Sabbath Remembrance. The matter that is read from the second scroll on that day would begin with the Hebrew word, “Zachor”. The Jewish calendar was arranged in such a way that the Sabbath zachor was observed every year on the Sabbath before Purim. The Torah reading

for the seventh day Passover (Exodus 13.17) describes the dramatic rescue of Israelites who were trapped between the pursuing army and the sea reeds. Strongly God provided the way and then Israelites passed that way safely. This part was ended with thanks given to God by singing a song.

The feast of Yom kippur on the 10th of “Tisri” is the only feast mentioned in the Pentateuch. Though the feast of Esther was also mentioned in the Bible (Esther 4.16) the Rabbis did not give much importance to that.

Rosh Hoshana in Jewish tradition is a good time for the people to prove their loyalty to God. Tradition had taught to the people of Israel that on Rosh Hosana, they used to blow ram’s horn as a reminder of the animal that Abraham found and sacrificed as a substitute to his Isaac. In the morning reading for the “Day of Atonement” the script part would be taken from Leviticus 16.1 - 31, and the High priest was supposed to take care of the formalities of the Yom Kippur.

But regarding fasting, it is not clearly said any where as one must follow to achieve something in one’s life. Yet prophet Isaiah mentioned the advantages of keeping in fasting. He explained clearly about meaningful fasting as follows:

1. Fasting leads one to loose the fetters of wickedness.
2. It will stop doing the bands of oppression.
3. It opens the door of freedom to those who are in bondage.
4. Fasting encourages the sharing of one’s house with the homeless.
5. Fasting allows to share the bread with the destitute.
6. It will also prompt one to share the clothing with the naked.

We can also see the importance of fasting mentioned by Queen Esther in the Bible. On the thirteenth of Adar, the day before Purim, Queen Esther of ancient Persian kingdom, engaged herself in a dancing act which would have cost her life. She happened to meet her husband King Ahasuerus without prior permission to plead for her people (the Jews), who were threatened by Haman the prime minister. Before she took that venture, She asked all Jews to go on fast from dawn to dusk the day before Purim. This Purim holiday was actually one of the important festivals to Jews. Though it is mentioned in the Bible in the book of Esther, it never achieved the status of Biblical holidays, like those ordained in the Pentateuch.

THE WRITERS OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

This topic is really fascinating. It is concerned more to the new interpretation about the origin and meaning of the Dead Sea scrolls. Those scrolls had become more controversial. Yet fascinating subject to the research scholars and historians to know more and more about them; since the time of their discovery in the Qumran caves in the year 1947 by the shepherd boy by name Bedouin, In this context a professor Norman Golb challenged some people who said they were written by a small desert dwelling people. But he pointed out those scrolls were produced by people of ancient Judaism then they were kept in the library of Jerusalem and finally smuggled out of the capital city at the time of the attack of Romans in 70 AD.

The Professor Norman Golbeloquently depicted the spiritual fervor of the people at that time who lived and wrote. "Actually it was the time of wonderful writings of great books like the Hebrew Holy Bible and the birth of the New Testament. In the Qumran plateau, the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered and Khierbet Qumran dominate the Sea's North Western Shore. Even though it was mentioned in any ancient source it had drawn the attention of the explorers; during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Then in 1940 an eminent historian and archeologist Michael Avi- Yonah perceived at a fortress among mainly military sites in the Judaeen wilderness. Their main purpose during Biblical and intertestamental time was to defend Jerusalem from the enemies beyond the river Jordan and the Dead sea. Then in 1947after the publication of the Avi -Yonah's map which contained this information that Bedouin tribes men made their wonderful discovery of the first seven scrolls in the cave. It was just a kilometer North of Khirbet Qumran. And it was the time of the out break of enmity between the Jews and Arabs following the partition of mandatory Palestine During that critical time this discovery caused a great excitement among other people to go toward Jerusalem and beyond, to find out some other places of discovery. Those scrolls were undoubtedly a contribution of the antiquity which had been hidden there for about two thousand years ago. And those scrolls became a great value to the history of Judaism and early Christianity.

One of the first text discovered and named later as “Manual of discipline”. It is said about the sectarian group of believers who resembled ancient fascist sect known as the “Essenes”. Then the scholars like pliny the Elder in the later first century A.D found out in his natural history that a group of Essenes lived on the western shore of the Dead sea, somewhere above the town of “En Gedi”. He further said that those Essenes did not marry and lived isolated life; but only with palm trees as their company. According to another historian by name Josephs the Essenes were one of the three sects of philosophies of the Jews in the second Temple Palestine.

The others were pharisees and Sadducees. The main occupation of them was agriculture. Josephus and philo both historians agreed on one point that is the way of the life of Essenes. Josephus described that the Essenes belief in God was completely in control of all earthly things. They also believed the soul of man was immortal and the soul would be rewarded or punished after this life. The result depends upon the deeds they do in this world. They thought it was injustice to maintain slaves. They followed the laws of Sabbath observances and ritual purity. The Essenes believed that the body was a prison house to the soul, until the time of death.

THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE JEWS

Albright expressed his opinion and agreement regarding the developing theory. He said that the scrolls had been written by a group of Essenes who lived near the Qumran caves where the scroll manuscripts were discovered. On the whole all the readers agreed and Indorsed the statement of Albright in our desertation also. We naturally refer to the writers of the text to the Essenes covenanters of Qumran. Just at that peak time the war of Israel’s independence was over and Jerusalem became a divided city. Then a team of catholic and protestant scholars were working in the Judaran wilderness on one hand the Arab infected Jerusalem priests and students were working on the other. In such conditions it is quite but natural the enmity between the Jews and Muslims increased a lot. Just at that time professor ElizarSuknik, of Hebrew university who was also an esteemed archaeologist somehow managed to look into the seven newly discovered texts. He felt extremely happy to see them and purchased three out of seven. Then in 1954 the remaining four were purchased in the

united states for Israel Museum. At present all the seven texts were safe and secure in the shrine of the books. At that time the scrolls included two texts of the Biblical book of prophet Isaiah as well as the works that were completely unknown to anybody. One of them appeared to be a collection of religious Hymns or “Hodayot”, which were in the style of Biblical psalms; and from them only eighteen columns and various fragments were preserved. In addition to that, a short commentary (presher) on the book of Habakkuk or presher Habakkuk or Habakkuk commentary was found. He was a minor prophet in the Bible.

As mentioned in that commentary there was an imaginative description of a war which was supposed to have taken place in the apocalyptic era between the good and evil people (troops) of humankind. It is known as in the earliest days as “war between the sons of light against the sons of darkness”. This was called finally “war scrolls”. Added to that a work of eleven columns was also found and its paras (paragraphs) described a gigantic ceremony for the purpose of following and leading a virtuous life. The original scrolls purchased by sukenik were, the “Hodayot”, the war scroll and one of the two manuscripts of the book of prophet Isaiah. After sometime the remaining four texts were purchased by his son “yegaelyadin” in New York city from the Syrian Metropolitan of Jerusalem; Mar Athanasius Samuel. We shall look into this last text later because of its importance as it is connected with the “Manual of Discipline”.

This “Manual of Discipline” contained many things like important instructions in several columns followed by the description of the ceremony of imitation, set out procedure in order to gain admission into the group and also a mode of disciplined behavior to become members. They were also instructed to leave all their wealth to lead a spiritual life which would lead to physical purity. Along with this they would take together ceremonial meals also which we call “love feast”. Then they were to participate in discussions to disclose the secrets of Pentateuch and conduct meetings connected groups, laws and good behavior among themselves. Then in 1957 some other discoveries of scrolls and scroll fragments were found in Judean wilderness; But only a small group of scholars were authorized to study and publish them. The research work has been continued by different scholars on the Dead Sea Scrolls, and its manuscripts team happened to publish the first volume of texts in 1955. And in the same year, the excavation

of the Khirbet Qumran area was stopped surprisingly the scholars could see the first printed volume of the texts.

FIRST SCROLLS DISCOVERY IN 1947

According to some reliable information a sect of Jewish people inherited the area of Khirbet Qumran in antiquity. From those occupied Jews, a group of them happened to write the scrolls and this took place not during the reign of “Hosmonean” or during the reign of Romans, but in the “Middle Ages”. The handwritings of the scrolls resembled Palestine Jewish inscriptions of intertestamental times. Along with the scrolls in the caves some ancient Greek Biblical fragments a good number of written old Canaanite or palaeo Hebrew scripts were also found. But the Jars found in some of the caves and the scrolls in them indicated they belonged to the period of Roman rule. It is proved that those writings were of Jewish authors composed exactly between 150 B.C. and 100 A.D. which were included in the manuscripts of the Septuagint (i.e. the Greek translation of the Hebrew scripture by 70 eminent Jewish priests in Alexandria during the reign of Alexander the Great). But they were not recognized as canonical or holy by rabbinical Judaism.

The originals of those Hebrew and Greek writings were all almost lost and forgotten. And regarding this “Manual”, is a text of highly spiritualizing quality. The deeper meaning is totally centered on the meaning of Torah, which has to be properly studied and understood. The author of the texts gave his opinion regarding the words of Joshua in 1.8 should be always in the minds of Israelites both day and night, the words concerned to Law and the importance of the Ten Commandments. They should remember also the words of prophet Isaiah (40.3). “A voice call out in the wilderness hears ye the way of the Lord”, have consonance with this idea a special meaning. “When all these became a unity in Israel they will be separated through those rules from the settlement of the men of wickedness going to the wilderness to clear there the way of the Lord as written “In the desert clear ye the way (for the Lord) make ye strait in the wilderness a path for our Lord, (this is the expanding of the Torah that (the Lord commanded through Moses, to do according to every revealed thing season by season. Keeping this in mind, the author of the Manual suggests that the deeper meaning of the words of Isaiah about going into the wilderness was what John the Baptist did after centuries. The most influential single idea promulgated

was that the Manual of Discipline described the beliefs and practices of a sect of Jews who lived in Kherbet Qumran. It is finally decided what was found in the Manual of Discipline could be found in the other discoveries of scrolls in the caves.

The Bedouin happened to discover six other scrolls out of the first Qumran cave. Two of them were concerned to the above mentioned scrolls of the book of prophet Isaiah and one of the four was unknown writing like the Manual. Then another text was about the Aramaic romance known as Genesis Apocryphan. It contained some imaginative tales based on the early lives of some people in the book of Genesis. They were like Lamech, Noah and Abraham who related the details of their lives. One of the texts was called “war scroll” which clearly depicted a giant battle may have to like place in an age to come. In that text the writers gave full details of the Apocalyptic terror of the battle from the beginning itself.

In that dreadful war, two different people would involve. This warfare is connected to the attack of the sons of light, against too many of the sons of darkness. The participants as the sons of darkness are – the army of Biblical, the troops of Eclm, and moab, the troops of Ammonites, the army of Philistia the troops of the Kittim of Assur and other allied forces who perpetuate wickedness against the covenanted people. The opposite side army is the sons of Livi, the sons of Judah and the sons of Benjamin and also the diaspora of the desert shall fight against the heathens in the manner of one troop after another diaspora of the sons of light return from the desert of the nations to encamp at the desert of Jerusalem. (Column 1 lines 1-7)

With the discovery and publication of “manual”, some scholars found certain lines common in both the texts, “the Manual and the Damascus covenant”. The same words and ideas were repeated in both of them. Then the text “Peshar Habakkuk and the liturgical Hodayot” put for scrutiny some parallel reputation of some words and ideas emerged between both the texts. The final outcome of all these statements is that all the discoveries are interconnected, in using the same words and expressing the same ideas. The peshar on Habakkuk was more fascinating and historically more important than the text of Hodayot. It represented the ancient writer, who wished to relate his statement as a minor prophet Habakkuk in the Bible.

WHAT IS THE DAMASCUS COVENANT ?

The Lord remembered the covenant of the ancients and raised from Aaron men of understanding and from Israel men of wisdom. He made His law known to them and they dug well. “The well the princess dug, that the nodes of the people, delved with the staff”. (Numbers 21.18) The “well” is Torah and the diggers are the representatives of Israel who left the land of Judah and lived in the land of Damascus. The scholar who identified the Essenes of Qumran was surprised to find two sects of them following a common religious system in the same district of the Dead Sea. These two sects lived together for two centuries with common habits with religious rituals and ceremonies.

According to Qumran Essene theory, the Messianic Ruler was one of the seventy fragmentary manuscripts that were found in cave alone. Once it was exploded and excavated, people found a variety of the remains of some Hebrew liturgy texts and twelve of them were scriptural writings. They were including the fragments of the scroll of Leviticus, written in the Old canonistic palaeo Hebrew script which indicated their age. There were also non – Biblical texts as fragments which were the commentaries on the biblical, Micah, Zephaniah and psalms; In general it is quite similar to the pesher Habakkuk which was found earlier. Then in February 1956, a Ta-amaresh Bedouin located another scripts in cave 3 which is the North of Khirbet Qumran. It was called (11 Q) which had some of the most important treasures. How far, the copper scrolls that were discovered at Masada manuscripts and the seize of Jerusalem are worthy for debate The discovery of copper scrolls in cave 3 in 1955, appeared to be a great improvement in the scroll research. The contents of the text found in a recess behind the manuscripts provided most important issues for new understanding of scrolls origins. The discovery of scrolls and the site of Khirbat Qumran placed an indilible impression in all subsequent debates. The copper scroll found in two sections and it could not be unfolded immediately because of three reasons –

- 1) Due to its long age.
- 2) Due to its brittleness.
- 3) Due to its inflexibility.

Most of the words in that copper scrolls were correctly understood by Heidelberg scholar K.G.Keedin during his visit to Jerusalem.

Later Keedin published an article, which suggested about the scrolls as they contained the description of Essene treasures and his view point was totally occupied. Next in the book of Dr. John Allegore of Manchester university, written about the scrolls, he first transcribed and translated. He published his book on the copper scroll independently and gave detailed information about it.

After the discovery of copper scrolls and made enough research the scholars became more enthusiastic to discover more and more ancient manuscripts near Jerico city and some scholars began their search around Jerusalem called Judean wilderness for further evidence. Eventually Israel's attention was drawn toward Masada, the great rock forties in the desert in the south of "En Gedi". It is about fifty kilometers from Qumran caves. Masada was under the states of Israel from its inception and Israeli archeologists conducted a survey during 1955-56. Then the capture of Masada was a final major event in the first revolt. After that the Romans established a garrison there. In course of time some habitation took place, during the Byzantine period. But in a very short time that place became desolate and deserted filled with dust and debris as centuries passed.

Sometime later two seasons of digging archeologists under the direction of Yigad Yadin uncovered the whole area of Masada including Herod's palace and part of that site was used by the sicaree and the refugees that came from Jerusalem during the period of resistance against the hard core Romans. Among the ruins the scholars found many artifacts of the period, inscribed coins, jars with the names of their owners and at least fifteen more important Hebrew texts. Among those fragments scrolls there were two scrolls concerned to the book of Deuteronomy and to the book of "Ezekiel". They were found in a building which was identified as a Synagogue and some other texts were found in rooms near the great wall in the area of Masada. And many more in a particular room of chamber of rampart. Those good number of fragments were included with the fragments of "Leviticus" fragments of two copies of psalms twenty six fragments of the original texts of wisdom of Ben Sire (=Ecclesiasticus) fragments of the two copies of Jubilee literary texts, documentary papers in Hebrew, Greek and Latin parts of the so called songs of the Sabbath sacrifice "otherwise known as Angelic Liturgy texts".

Generally speaking the literacy loads were of the same pattern that were found at Qumran caves. In 1960 some of the fragments of Qumran such as "the songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice" were published and the editor said that the work

was included with the publication of calendar dividing the year into twelve months of thirty days each month. But some of the early writers pointed out that such a calendar was peculiar to the “Qumran Essenes”. Actually many of the defenders came from Jerusalem before and following the capture of Jerusalem city by the Romans in 70 A.D. The discovery of this and the Qumran like fragments would give a clear idea that, the fragment scrolls found in Masada and fragment scrolls found in Qumran caves all were composed by a sect of Essenes who lived around Qumran caves. But Allegro believed the Essenes had nothing to do with hiding them in a cave near the monastery. Regarding the treasure it belonged to the Temple in Jerusalem and the priests of the Temple had already taken precautions to keep that treasure out of the reach of the plundering Roman soldiers. The Essenes also followed the same method as followed by the Temple priests to hide their library.

Yigael Yadin published another Qumran manuscript in the year 1977. Then he explained what he had written (to the scholars) and everybody was happy with his wanting. Then after ten years he gave an announcement in Jerusalem about the scrolls that contained important rules connected to the God’s Temple of Jerusalem. Later he called it Temple scroll. He came to know the origin of the scrolls was the Qumran cave 11 and in fact it appeared to be a mystery. But Yadin called it Qumran scroll. It is said, actually nobody knew from which place it had come or by whom it was given to Yadin. One thing is proved. The antiquate dealer received \$105000 as the cost of that scroll which was called the Temple scroll.

The Hebrew text of the Temple scroll cave 11 and Yadin’s commentary appeared in 1977 with some predictable view forced upon the readers. In 1952 thousands of manuscript fragments in cave 11 were unearthed and most of them were kept in the Rockefeller Museum and deposited in that ground floor workroom. And in that ground floor a team of scholars joined together and sorted out the Biblical and non-biblical fragments. Then between 1952 and 1954 a most gifted scholar. Father Josef Milik of Poland identified some fragments of the acts of “Torah” which he referred to (4 Q Mishn) which means (fragments of a work in early rabbinic (Mishnic) Hebrew found in Qumran cave 4).

The importance of the observations of Milik about the “acts of Torah” gave the impression that it was written either in the first or middle of the first century, but the truth is far off from its existence. And Milik made use of some

passages from the acts of the Torah text for the purpose of his discussion during the first century A.D. Then he produced a documentary work at the same time. After some years, the Temple scroll was published which resulted a program of ritual observance which was not found in the earlier publication of the same scrolls. The temple scroll and the system of Jewish law of the second Temple periods one could point out an occasional exceptions, parallel rules, prohibition of sexual relationship in the Holy city were found in both the Damascus covenant and in the Temple scroll. So it became impossible to keep direct correspondence between the Temple scroll and other systems of Jewish law, and this fact was known to people through different sources. The calendar of the Temple scroll was prepared in accordance with the early rabbinic calendar and did not agree with the Qumran sect. The writer of the acts of Torah describes in his epistle and said we have separated ourselves from the majority of the nation as a result of the specific differences in ritual practices he listed.

The Hebrew term the writer used for “We have separated” was – *parashmu* – and this word had taken its roots in pharisees (Hebrew – *pereeshim* which means separatists). This term was applied only to pharisees who were well noted in history. In this context some writers suggested that because they studied and observed thoroughly the Biblical laws of purity. And the term “we have separated” was not found in any other Qumran scrolls. The language used was also idiomatic. The phrases were affectionate toward one another and well cultured. They always maintained harmonious relationship among themselves whereas the behavior of Sadducees was quite opposite. They used to be unfriendly among themselves and their intercourse with their peers appears more crude as if they have been dealing with the aliens.

The author of the acts of Torah called the Pentateuch with the title, the book of Moses and this expression was also not found in any other scroll. The other books he particularly respected were the books of prophets the book of David called psalms. He made special mention of David and his son, Solomon, how they received abundant blessings from God, and how the sons of David were forgiven. The most astonishing events in the case of the author were his wonderful statements about the “End of Days”. He first wrote that the “End of Days” (*aharithayayamin*) was upon the Israelites that they would return to the Lord one day and the wicked be punished. According to Josephus a popular Jewish historian, it was the phrase who believed that souls had power to survive

death and there are rewards and punishments under the earth. For those people who lead a pious life God would show them the easy way of life. Regarding Sadducees Josephus said, they had rejected the idea of fate altogether. Even the Gospels and the Book of Acts confirmed that they had no belief in compensatory after life or “End of Days”. Actually this concept is quite contrary to the other Jewish people.

The Sadducees because of their strange way of life never expressed their views about the “End of the Season” in the moral and religious context and also they never spoke of reward for the righteous and punishment for the wicked. Josephus a popular Jewish historian clearly spoke about the Essenes and their idea about afterlife. But their opinion was not a satisfactory answer to the author of the act of Torah. The faith of the Essenes was that the body would perish and become futile; but the soul would become immortal. But for the Essenes the souls of good had lived above, beyond the seas. Regarding the wicked their souls would be chastised in a murky dungeon. As a matter of fact, one or two laws of the acts of Torah are to be applied to so called Sadducees on the contrary would express that they like to remain unclean or impure till evening.

Josephus while writing circa in 75 A.D describes fundamentally two groups among Essenes. Those who would celebrate and those who were not, and in addition to them, the Sadducees, as well as more pharisees. Apart from them there were also Zealots and Secarie whom Josephus called sectarian groupings. However the scrolls made it clear that the number of religious groupings among the Jews was more than the number mentioned by Josephus. Many fragments were published from Masada very recently. They were concerning to the rebels during the revolt by Zealots and other Jews against Romans. In addition to fragment texts the manuscripts of Sabbath songs (angelic liturgy) which were known in several names of manuscripts were found in Qumran in Masada. In fact, many of the works found in Qumran, were the common heritage of the second Temple of Jerusalem and did not originate in nor confined to Qumran sectarian circle.

Basing on the above said information it became crystal clear that the scrolls and texts discovered at different places have become main source for the study of Judaism in different stages in the last centuries before the Common Era. It was a peak time that a number of Qumran officials began to suggest a name to the theory. According to their suggestion, some of the texts found in

the cave had not been composed at Qumran but they were brought from some unknown place. John Strunell, who was still official Editor of the acts of Torah said that with the participation of Elisha Qimran he completed a six hundred page commentary on the brief text.

He clearly said Judaism is a racist religion. It is the very existence of Jews as a group and as members of Jewish religion. Regarding, the Sabbath laws, his opinion was that they are the excuse or examples of laziness. As indicated already about the Qumran scroll, there was no correct date of their writing. They were not originated in a full millennium earlier. They appeared more remote in time and offered only five or six hundred examples of Hebrew manuscripts which were spread over three centuries. It is said total of fourteen ancient Hebrew texts were examined and eight out of them were found in Qumran two of them from Masada, and the remaining four did not have any address at which place they were discovered. During the year 1980, the spread of the Samizdat version of the acts of Torah had been continued and through this the number of scholars were increased and came to know the importance of the text. Then in 1989 a good number of scholars who gathered at Poland in the second conference to discuss on the Torah agreed to prepare a suitable version of that and distributed the copies in Germany. And the publication of the acts of Torah surprised even the two editors of those volumes because those samizdat version was already became popular among people.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF DEAD SEA SCROLLS?

According to historical background, the Dead Sea scrolls and the surrounding area played a very crucial role in the sociology of knowledge. A group of scholars planned to mention about these texts became necessary to control the ideas of their origin. And this control plan was amply demonstrated by the American scroll exhibition. During the process of opening the scrolls and those who were holding monopoly tried to maintain control over their opponents. The value and importance of the scrolls and their basic importance found necessary for our understanding of Judaism and Christianity. After thorough research it is proved that those scrolls were inferior both literally and spiritually and they did not provide any link between Biblical and rabbinic itself. After knowing about three major problems which required correct resolution who wrote those manuscripts, what actually they wanted to convey to the people and primarily what must be their intrinsic value as spiritual and literary productions. A historian

of the Jews would have concerned more for the value of the scrolls for correct understanding the true history of Jews and also about the earlier Palestinian Christianity and during what period they were written. It is asserted that the Qumran scrolls were deposited in the caves approximately in 70 A.D as contemporary account.it is said those scrolls did not contain either gospels or rabbinic dicta – to Essenes to study them at suitable time.

The persecution of Jews by the heathen king Antiochus Apiphanes and the Maccabean revolt led to the spiritual and material independence of the Jewish nation both in Judaea and outside. The Jewish monotheism was saved with the momentous results. In the second century B.C after centuries of subjection to the imperial powers an independent state had arisen under the leadership of Hasmaneans and gradually spread over whole of Palestine and finally achieved international recognition and status. As a result of that, Palestine religiously and naturally became “Greater Judaea”. And this fact was stamped on the religious cultural and ethnic character of the country for a long time. Many of the Qumran scrolls reflect the development and the remaining new literature dates from the inception of the Roman domination of Palestine in 63 A.D. Some scholars of the New Testament demonstrate many parallels between the ideas it contained and those found in the scrolls.

One of the most important text the Damascus covenant, had become well known and its identity was debated before the Qumran discovery. Inspite of many earlier identifications suggested for its text the discovery of the same text in the caves..... confirmed a link between Damascus document and the literature of Qumran community. According to Josephus Essenes men who married took every precaution to ascertain good moral and physical character. A fragment was published in the catalogue which gave an unworthy women in marriage to man or vice versa is like violating the Pentateuch injection against wearing normal garments or cloths.

The discovery of pottery was confirmed the connection between the scrolls found in the caves and the artifacts found nearby khirbet Qumran ruins. It was believed by the scholars and people that the sects(people) hid the scrolls in jars and kept the jars in the caves just for the sake of safety. The community rule (the Manual of Discipline) would tell us about the sect we believe lived in the Qumran area and that sect must be Essenes. It seemed some Torah precepts (the acts of

Torah) appeared to have been written in the form of letter, by the leader of Qumran community.

After proper discussion of previous chapters reviewed the outcome of all that must have correctly understood by the readers. It is undoubtedly a most progressive period in the history of Jewish people. The scholars studied and every one of the fragment scroll was investigated some other scrolls, containing non-sectarian poetry were psalms scrolls found in the cave 11. They were also included non-canonical Hymns, which frequently reflected the Hellenistic ideas and the songs of Sabbath sacrifice from the cave which contained fragments of at least such six poetic compositions and the cave 4 had some more poetic writings. They reflected various shades of religious expressions and one of the most important among such was pseudo epigraphic psalms collection.

The biblical citations that were used in the non-biblical texts were also not in uniform. As already quoted earlier, the Jewish people did not settle, upon the canonized "Holy Scriptures" until second century A.D. The calendar was also showed a wide variety of practices among the intertestamental Jews. In addition to that the brotherhood system was also not mentioned in the Damascus covenant which was put in the American exhibition through an interesting cave 4 fragment. Many such written fragments were found in the Qumran caves and among them one such doctrinally divergent in nature was "the acts of Torah". The strange thing here was the author of the acts of the Torah, used Hebrew of a proto-Tannaitic in character and the same method was used in the copper scroll, also But the Temple scroll reflected an independent method of its own.

When the scholars neglected the question of scrolls relationship to Rabbinic Judaism the earliest Christianity occupied an important place. And majority of writers in this subject found striking links between the ideas and practices in the manuscript. Therefore there were some similarities to early Christian practices and ceremonies were observed among the features of the scrolls to gain public attention. One of such practice was communal meal, (what we call now-a-days as love feast). There were some passages also from two valuable scrolls that described this system of communal meal in details. The first scroll that mentioned this system was Manual of Discipline. As mentioned in the passage whenever ten people of the council of "yahad" come together for meal, they would sit according to their ranks. At that time a priest was supposed to announce blessing and then they would start their meal of bread and wine. The same type of

passage was found in the scroll of Messianic rule, too. Here, the Messiah of Israelites was Jesus Christ. The same type of passages we can find in three Gospels and in the writings of Apostle Paul. Baptism according to the New Testament is a sign of one's entrance into faith. We can also say a pre-requisite qualification and mandatory for achieving salvation. There is a passage in the Manual of Discipline concerning Baptism. It is said the unraputed persons would not be allowed to enter into the waters of Baptism.

Baptismal rituals were wide spread in early rabbinic and Christian times. According to the book of Acts all the early Christians lived together and had everything in common. They used to sell away their properties and share that with others who needed. Likewise those who wanted to remain as the members of the community must give away all their properties was unique and praiseworthy and it could be found in two groups in ancient Judaism.

There were some common features between the scrolls and the New Testament which after illuminated the latter in the important ways particularly in the area of biblical interpretations. Nothing like commentaries spiritually appeared in the New Testament but the general understanding of the nature of Jewish scriptures and its proper use of prophesies are found there and in the scrolls. Majority of the scrolls and in the New Testament we find a belief in a God who is intimately involved in human affairs either punishing or rewarding His people according to His judgment. In contrast the Sadducees belief was that God remained aloof from the affairs of the world but no such text was found in the Qumran caves.

At certain occasions a myriad of angels acted as mediators between God and man. Angels were found in many of the scrolls who used to help the human beings in booths in war scroll (Column 7,11) guiding their actions in the same part of the Manual of worship the Almighty God in "the songs of the Sabbath sacrifices". In the Gospels of the New Testament also, we come across angels in certain functions. According to the Gospel of Luke (chapter 1 and 2) the angels had announced the coming of Jesus and his parents. In the book of revelation, we come across how the angels worshipped God in the Temple of heaven (chapters 4-5) and continued the punishment of God against the unrighteous (chapters 9-10). Some similarity between the doctrine of two spirits was also found in the Manual (column 3) and certain New Testament passages.

According to the Manual human souls have been guided by the two spiritual angels. The spirit of light would try to lead the humanity in the way of righteousness and rule over all righteous individuals whereas the spirit of darkness would try to tempt the people to act wickedly and rules completely over the wicked. Satan appears in the New Testament as a spirit frequently tempts people to do evil. He once tried to tempt even Jesus Christ to do some evil.

According to early Christians most of the people followed only the ways of wickedness. Instead of the ways of truth and towards God. And this same idea was expressed by the authors of Damascus covenant. At that time the priests happened to be the central figures in the Damascus covenant and also in the “Manual of Discipline”, even though they did not perform any sacrificial performances in the Manual. The early Christianity and the authors of the scrolls looked for some alternatives in the place of sacrificial system to avoid humanity from sinful life. It seemed one of the scrolls also mentioned about the Messiah of Israelites who was put to death. The most striking difference between the New Testament conception and “war scroll” the pesher Isaiah the pesher on psalms and other scrolls was that in the New Testament the people of God had no part in the said battle, but the vengeance of God left to Him and to His angels. This might be in reality one of the striking difference between the New Testament ideas and those found intermittently among the scrolls. For example, it is said in the book of proverbs, “When your enemy falls rejoice not”, (24.17) and “If your enemy be hungry give him bread to eat”. (35.21)

This New Testament time again urged the readers or true believers not only to love and care one another but also to love and do good to them. This same idea was repeated in the rabbinic literature as well. But in those scrolls, the teachers, enemies and the foreign nations and ungodly were spoken of and they were not shown any mercy. The Manual of Discipline orders eternal hatred in a spirit of secrecy for the men of perdition. The Qumran caves texts also spoke about its end of a Messiah, who would raise the dead on behalf of His Father God. Let us look into the following passage carefully. The heavens and the earth will have their Messiah, the sea and that is all in them. He will not turn aside from the commandment of Holy ones. Take courage all you, who seek the Lord in His work. Will you not thus find the Lord, all you who bear hope in your heart?

Surely the Lord will seek out the pious and will call the righteous by name. Over the poor will His spirit hour, faithful ones will He restore by might. He will honor pioussness on the throne of the eternal kingdom, Release the captives, make the blind to see, raise up those bent low. Forever will I cling to Him against the powerful and trust. His loving kindness And His goodness will be forever, His Holy Messiah will not be slow in coming. As for the wonders that have not Henceforth been the Lord will do them when the Messiah comes. Then will he heal the sick, and resurrect the dead, to the oppressed will he announce glad tidings..... he will lead the Holy ones, he will separate them.

The above mentioned Messianic actions showed a kind of supernatural powers that Jesus had exercised according to the Gospel of John, when he saw his dead friend Lazarus. That occasion gave chance to Jesus to say: "I am the resurrection and the life whoever believes in me even though he may die, he will live again". It is really surprising to find in a scroll fragment from Qumran cave 11 some details of Melchizedeck. As described in the scroll fragment Melchizedeck was a heavenly spirit. His picture depicted in the scrolls was completely different, that was shown in the book of Hebrew. His way of life and other things were not confined to early Christian circle, but totally to the product of a hidden Palestine Jewish community. By the end of second century A.D the church became more gentile than the Jewish. As a result, its theology and practice increasingly reflected the non-Jewish atmosphere.

Some texts from Jerusalem libraries and some hard collection that were hidden in the wilderness of the Dead sea, scrolls were the remains and miraculously recovered of a hoard of spiritual treasures of the Jewish people of second century commonwealth period. With the publication of more scrolls the Judaism of that period became more complex and richly textured. The Jews as a matter of fact were in their own desperate position because they were anticipating the destruction of the Temple. It was actually the physical embodiment of Jewish ideas. They were under the impression that they preserved all the scrolls to the people of the world would one day able to know the greatness of Jewish ideology. The constant effort of hiding the writings of the Jews at the first Revolt became an act of desperation. By that risk and efforts of hiding the script of Hebrew tongue and many other such writings of the Palestinian Jews were given the chance of survival.

SOME MEMORABLE PROMISES OF GOD

There are a variety of promises mentioned in the Bible which were written by different writers with the inspiration of God. It is said about 40 writers compiled the Holy Bible and it was done in about 1500 years starting with the prophet Moses and ending with St. John with the book of Revelation. All these promises are written here Alphabetically. So that the readers can easily locate them in the Holy Bible.

A

- 1) Lord, you established peace for us. All that we have accomplished, you have done for us. (Isaiah 28.12)
- 2) A longing fulfilled is a tree of life (proverbs 13.13)
- 3) “Every one may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all his toil that is the gift of God”. (Ecclesiastes 3.13)
- 4) You will eat the fruit of your labour. Blessings and prosperity will be yours”. (psalms 128.2)
- 5) Jesus said, “In that year you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth my father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you had not asked anything in my name. Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete”. (John 16.23-24)
- 6) In my distress I called to the Lord and he answered me From the depth of the grave I called for help and you listened to my cry. (Jonah 2.2)
- 7) “Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things, you do not know” says the Lord. (Jeremiah 33.3)
- 8) “Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of that, we do not see”. (Hebrews 11.1)
- 9) Those who have served will gain on excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 3.13)
- 10) I am not ashamed because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard. What I have entrusted to him for that day”. (2 Timothy 1.12)

The above said passages speak about the promises of God and His answering our prayers and His security.

B

- 1) "God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life". (John 3.16)
- 2) Jesus said. "I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life". (John 8.47)
- 3) Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved you and your household. (Acts 16.21)
- 4) Whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned. (John 3.18)
- 5) Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20.29)
- 6) Blessed is the man who does not walk in the council of the wicked or stand in the way of sinner or stand in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night". (psalm 1.1-2)
- 7) Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord whose confidence is in him. (Jeremiah 17.7)
- 8) "Every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from the faith of the heavenly lights who does not change like shifting shadows". (James 1.17)
- 9) "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For them is the kingdom of heaven". (Matthew 5.3)

The above quoted promises speak about our faith and belief and the blessings of God.

C

- 1) Blessed is he who is kind to the needy. (proverbs 14.21)
- 2) He will give to the poor will lack nothing but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses.
- 3) He who is kind to the poor leads to the world (proverbs 27.27) and he will reward him for what he has done. (proverbs 19.17)
- 4) A generous man will himself be blessed. For he shares his food, with the poor (proverbs 22.9)
- 5) Train a child in the way he shall grow. And when he is old he will not turn from it (proverbs 24.8)
- 6) Discipline your son and he will give peace, he will bring delight to your soul. (Proverbs 29.17)

- 7) Jesus said, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18.4)
- The above said references speak about the advantages of charity and proper bringing up of the children.
- 8) "I will be a father to you and you will be my sons and daughters" says the Lord Almighty (2 coronations 6.18)
- 9) The spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children". (Revelation 1.7)
- 10) Look he coming with the clouds and every eye will see him (Revelation 1.7)
- 11) Jesus said, "Behold I am coming soon; my reward is with me and I will give to every one according to what he has done". (Revelation 22.12)
- 12) Jesus said, "you also must be ready because the son of man will come at an hour when you do not expect him (Like 12.40)
- 13) God's house-hold is the church of the living God the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Timothy 3.15)
- 14) The Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit (psalm 34.18)
- 15) You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassion slow to anger, and abounding in love. (Nehemiah 9.17)
- 16) The Lord is good to all he has compassion on all he has made. (Psalms 145.9)
- 17) As a Father has compassion in his children. So, the Lord has compassion on those who fear him (Psalm 103.13)
- 18) Your compassion is great to Lord, preserve my life according to your laws. (Psalms 119.156)
- 19) The lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot, from being smared. (Proverbs 3.26)
- 20) This is the confidence we have in approaching God that if we have anything according to his will he hears us. (1 John 5.14)
- 21) The fear of the Lord leads of life; Then one rests content untouched by troubles..... (proverbs 19.23)
- 22) Godliness with contentment is greatest gain (1 Timothy 6.6)
- 23) Never will I leave you,
Never will I forsake you..... (Hebrew 13.5)
- 24) If we have food and clothing we will be content with that (1 Timothy 6.8)

- 25) The cheerful heart has a continual feast. (Proverbs 15.15)
- 26) Be strong and take heart all you who hope in the Lord (psalms 31.24)
- 27) The Lord your God, who is among you is a great and awesome God (Deuteronomy 7.21)
- 28) I will strengthen you, and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41.10)
- 29) With your help, I can advance against a troop; with my God, I can scale a wall. (Psalm 18.29)

The above mentioned quotations from 8 to 29 speak about the churchmen's contentment, man's compassion add man's courage which are necessary in man's life.

D

- 1) Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things, you do not know says the Lord. (Jeremiah 33.3)
- 2) This is what the Almighty Lord says, "Give careful thought to your ways" (Haggai 1.5)
- 3) Commit your way to the Lord, trust in him. (Psalms 37.5)
- 4) In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps. (Proverbs 16.9)
- 5) Trust in everything; hold on to the good, avoid every kind of evil -(1 Thessalonians 5.21-22)
- 6) We know that we have come to know if we obey his commands. (1 John 2.3)
- 7) Jesus said, "This is my Father's glory that you bear much fruit showing yourselves to be my disciples (John 15.8)
- 8) Jesus said, all men will know that you army disciples if you love one another" (John 13.35)

These 8 references speak about our decisions to become true disciples.

E

- 1) You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted, you encourage them and you listen to their cry. (Psalm 10.17)
- 2) The Lord is good to those who help is in them to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quickly. For the salvation of the Lord. (lamentations 3.25)
- 3) Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you he will never let the righteous fail (Psalms 55.22)

- 4) Encourage one another and build each other up first as in fact you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5.4)
- 5) The world and its desires pass away but the man who does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2.17)
- 6) The ways of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6.23)
- 7) Jesus said, "Whoever believes in the son has eternal life". (John 3.36)
- 8) "Having been justified by his grace we might become heirs, having the hope of eternal life". (Titus 3.7)

These 8 references are concerned to the eternal life and encouragement.

F

- 1) If your enemy is hungry give him food to eat if he is thirsty give him water to drink. (Proverbs 25.21)
 - 2) Jesus said, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all those things will be given to you as well". (Matthew 6.33)
- God wanted to say through these two passages that if we are good to others, God will also be good to us.

H

- 1) "I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security" says the Lord (Jeremiah 33.6)
- 2) O Lord my God, "I called to you for help and you healed me". (Psalms 30.2)
- 3) "Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a salvation from there the Lord Jesus Christ". (Philippians 3.20)
- 4) God did not call us to be impure but to live a Holy life. (1 Thessalonians 4.7)
- 5) "Blessed are they whose ways are blameless who walk according to the law of the Lord". (Psalms 119.1)
- 6) An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips. (Proverbs 24.26)
- 7) "The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love". (Psalms 147.11)
- 8) Humanity and the fear of the Lord bring wealth, and honour and life. (Proverbs 22.4)
- 9) "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" (James 4.10)
- 10) The Lord takes delight in his people he crowns the humble with salvation. (Psalms 149.4)

The above quotations speak about the gift of God to the people, who are humble to Him.

I

- 1) As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humanity, goodness and patience". (Colossians 3.12)
- 2) When man's wages are pleasing to the Lord, he makes even his enemies live at peace, with him. (Proverbs 16.7)

In these two passages, God gave some suggestions to his chosen people how they can live peacefully.

J

- 1) You made me glad by your deeds O Lord, I sing for joy at the works of your hands. (Psalms 92.4)

K

- 1) Count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God, in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6.11)
- 2) The spirit of God, who has made me the breath of the Almighty gives me life. (Job 33.4)
- 3) We love because he first loved me. (1 John 4.19)
- 4) Love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4.8)
- 5) Jesus said, "The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God – (John 16.27)

The above said passages give us the idea about God's unconditional love toward his loved ones.

M

- 1) Teach us to number our days aright that we may be given a heart of wisdom. (Psalms 90.12)
- 2) "Within your temple O Lord we meditate on your unfailing love". (Psalms 48.9)
- 3) The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. (James 5.11)
- 4) The Lord has heard my cry for mercy the Lord accepts my prayer". (Psalms 6.9)

These quotations speak about our prayers to God and His acceptance of our prayers with compassion.

O

- 1) Jesus replied “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it”. (Luke 11.28)
- 2) If anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him that is how we know we are in him. (1 John 2.5)

The true meaning of these two passages is that man must be obedient to God; so that his love toward man is abundant.

P

- 1) The righteous man leads a blameless life, blessed are his children after him. (Proverbs 20.7)
- 2) Children’s children are a crown to the aged and parents are the pride of their children. (Proverbs 4.8)
- 3) Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer – (Romans 12.12)
- 4) “Wait for the Lord, be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord”. (Psalms 27.14)
- 5) Since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ”. (Romans 5.1)
- 6) Jesus said, “Blessed are the peace makers. For they will be called sons of God”. (Matthew 5.9)
- 7) Jesus said, “I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown”. (Revelation 3.11)
- 8) Praise be to the Lord. For he has heard my cry for mercy. (Psalms 8.6)
- 9) Jesus said, “If you believe you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer”. (Matthew 21.22)
- 10) The Lord replied, “My presence will go with you, and will give you rest”. (Exodus 33.14)
- 11) The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want (Psalms 21.1)
- 12) It is God’s will that my doing good you should silence the ignorant talk to foolishmen”. (1 peter 2.15)

These passages indicate that we can seek the presence of God and his guidance in everything.

Q

- 1) The Lord will fight for you. You need only to be still. (Exodus 14.14)
- 2) I will lie down and sleep in peace. For you alone Lord make me dwell in safety”. (Psalms 4.8)

These two passages tell us that God is always keep us in safe and secure.

R

- 1) Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us for it is written, cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. (Galatians 3.13)
- 2) Repent then and turn to God; so that your sins may be wiped out that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. (Acts 3.19)
- 3) Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled”. (Matthew 5.6)
- 4) The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayers. (1 peter 3.12)

According to these four passages God wanted us to repent from sins and he will have his redemption plan for all of us.

S

- 1) God our savior – wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of truth. (1 Timothy 2.3-4)
- 2) Jesus said, “It is written man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God”. (Matthew 4.4)
- 3) Those who trust in God, the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever. (Psalms 125.1)
- 4) Jesus said. “Watch and pray, so that you will not fall into temptations. The spirit is willing but the body is weak”. (Matthew 26.41)
- 5) A gentle answer turns away wrath. (Proverbs 15.1)
- 6) I can do anything through him, who gives me strength”. (Philippians 4.18)

The above mentioned passages from the Bible tell us that God will give us strength to do anything and added prayer is very important in the life of everybody.

T

- 1) The plans of the righteous are just but the advice of the wicked is dreadful. (Proverbs 12.5)
- 2) Jesus said, “Trust in God, also trust in me”. (John 14.1)
- 3) It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. (psalms 118.8)
- 4) All your words are true. All your righteous laws are eternal. (Psalms 119.160)

These four quotations suggest that we should trust God, and take shelter in him for safety.

U

- 1) With God, we will win the victory and he will trample down our enemies. (Psalms 60.12)
- 2) For lack of guidance a nation falls but many advisors make victory sure. (Proverbs 11.14)

These two examples give us the idea that we always need to advice of someone for peaceful living especially in the guidance of God.

W

- 1) The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever". (1 John 2.17)
- 2) Jesus said, "my father's will is that everyone who looks to the son and believers in him shall have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last days". (John 6.40)
- 3) Wisdom makes one wise man, more powerful than ten rulers in a city. (Ecclesiastes 7.10)
- 4) Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the goodness to all the creation". (Mark 16.15)

These four passages suggest that we should have faith in Christ then to preach about the creation and the advantages of acquiring wisdom.

SOME IMPORTANT POINTS

- 1) Number of Gold and silver articles taken away by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the Temple of God were 5400 in 586 B.C. But they were returned to the Temple by the Persian king Cyrus.
- 2) Elshaddai – is a Hebrew name means the God of Mountain.
- 3) The first five books from the Old Testament are called Pentateuch and the law of Moses was called "Torah".
- 4) Some commentators called the Book of "Revelation" as the book of seven or 5th Gospel. Gospel means "good News".
- 5) It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting to console the believed family. (Ecclesiastes 7.2)
- 6) Observing the Sabbath strictly is a sign between God and Israelites.
- 7) Prophets of the New Testament were – Easues, Agabu, Silos and Julius and four daughters of Philip. (women prophets)

- 8) More than 40 members of Jews took oath that they would not eat or drink until they kill Apostle Paul. (Acts 20.12)
- 9) Apostle Paul was from the seed of Abraham and Benjamine likewise King Saul, King David, Solomon, Queen 'Esther, all apostles all disciples and Jesus Christ were the descendants of Judah and Benjamine called Jews.
- 10) People used anti-lops skins for writing in olden days.
- 11) Bless them which persecute you, bless and curse not. (Romans 12.14)
- 12) The kingdom of God is not meat or drink but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Romans 14.17)
- 13) Charity is the greatest spiritual gift.
- 14) If Christ is not raised on the third day, your faith is vain. You are yet in your "sin". (1 Corinthians 15.17)
- 15) For we walk by faith but not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5.7)
- 16) If we live in spirit let us also walk in spirit. (Galatians 5.25)
- 17) For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2.5)
- 18) According to the Bible, Melchizedec was called the first high priest. He was the great, great grandson of Noah. He wrote a book called "The Roots of Mount Hararath" where in he gave the genealogy of "Noah". He was a shepherd boy God directly anointed him, and sent him to a distant place, and asked him to build a city. As God asked, he built a city and called it "Salem". (Genesis 18.14) which later became Jerusalem. He gave a name to that place "Canaan" the name of his grandfather, and later that was promised by God to Abraham and his descendants.
 - 1) Melchizedec was called the king of Righteousness.
 - 2) He was called the king of Salem.
 - 3) He was called the king of peace.
- 19) The second High priest was Jesus Christ.....
- 20) In the book of Hebrews, chapter 11 is called "the fruits of faith" because that chapter contained many examples of Faith.
- 21) Abraham justified his faith by offering his son as sacrifice when God asked him; so by work faith can be made perfect.
- 22) As the body without spirit is dead, so the faith without work is dead.
- 23) Humble yourself in the sight of God, and He shall lift you up. (James 4.10)

- 24) And prayer of faith shall save the sick; the Lord shall have him up. (James 5.15)
- 25) Because it is written, “be ye holy for I am holy”. (1 peter 1.16)
- 26) But beloved be not ignorant if this one thing that one day with the Lord, as a thousand years, and thousand years as one day. (2 peter 3.8)
- 27) Jerusalem was attacked by different enemies 17 times and finally got independence in 8th may 1948 from British.
- 28) The “Dead Sea” is the lowest part of the earth, about 1300 feet below the sea level. In 1947 about 900 scrolls were discovered in Qumran caves. They were also called “Dead Sea scrolls”. Among them, the manuscript of the Book of Isaiah, prophet, and the Ten Commandments were part of them.
- 29) The place of Armageddon is about 70 miles away from Jerusalem.
- 30) The crusade means, “war of the cross” that took place during 12th and 13th centuries.
- 31) If we confess our sins before God he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1.9)
- 32) If we love this world, and things the love of Father (God) will not be with us”. (1 John 2.15)
- 33) He that loveth not knoweth not God for God is love. (1 John 4.5)
- 34) No one hath seen God at any time. If we love one another God dwelleth with us and His love is perfect in us. (1 John 4.12)
- 35) John seemed to have written the “book of Revelation” in the island of “Patmos” as he was taken to that place as punishment. There he got vision to write this book primarily regarding the second coming of Christ. The Lord cometh with clouds.
- 36) Wormwood is the name of the “star” that would fall down from heaven at the trumpet sound of the third angel.
- 37) The “Book of Jubilee” was in existence before the Holy Bible was compiled. It was a holy book to Ethiopians along with the book of Enoch. According to this book, Adam and Eve had 9 children both boys and girls.
- 38) Enoch was a scientist and astrologer. He wrote two books about wars between giants and fallen angels.
 - I. The book of Enoch with 108 chapters.
 - II. The book of science about astrology.

- 39) Epiphany is the name of a Christian festival held on January in memory of the Magi, who came to see the baby Jesus from East.
- 40) It is said God created one hundred crores of angels and they were in 10 cadres.
- I. Arch-angels 7 in number.
 - II. Angels.
 - III. Cherubs, who were incharge of the tabernacle in heaven.
 - IV. Cherubim's who were incharge of the garden of Eden.
 - V. Power.
 - VI. Crowns.
 - VII. Thrones.
 - VIII. Authorities.
 - IX. Principalities.
 - X. Dominions.
- 41) Sea of Galilee – 13 miles length, 7 ½ miles width and 32 mile circumference.
- 42) Dead Sea – 60 miles length, 13 miles width and 1200 feet below the sea level and deep. The river Jordan starts at the foot of Mt. Herman, passes through the sea of Galilee and ends its flow in the Dead Sea. The quantity of water that comes to the Dead Sea is about 70, 00,000 tones. It is said the same quantity of water would evaporate every day, and so the land of the water would remain the same.
- 43) God said about Israelites. "I shall dwell in them and walk in them and I shall be thin God, and they will be my people".
- 44) You must believe in one God, Lord, one faith and one Baptism. (Ephesus 4.5)

JERUSALEM IN NUTSHELL

The city of Jerusalem had its roots in Judaic. Judaism and Christianity in the early centuries and then came Muslims in 7th century A.D. Its ancient walls measure 2 ½ miles in circumference and has mine gates. Eight of them were open to the public and the closed gate is called "the golden gate" within these ancient walls about 33,000 inhabitants shared four main quarters namely Jewish quarters, Christian quarters, Muslim quarters and Aramaean quarters.

Since ancient times, Jerusalem was prize passion to govern it means ruling of Jerusalem became more beneficial. According to history about twenty different

nations had invaded this city. They captured, governed and ruined the city for centuries. For Jews its importance lies in the Temple built by King Solomon and later rebuilt by King Herod the great. For Christians it is within those walls that Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross on the mount Calvary and rose from the dead (from the tomb).

For Muslims it is the 'Dome of the Rock' as they believe prophet Mohammad made his night journey to heaven from that place. It is very interesting to note that, since 1966 the average number of visitors to Jerusalem was over 2.3 million years. And 65% of them were with Christian faith. Then in 2001, this tourism was dropped drastically due to some reason.

THE GOLDEN GATE:

It was through this gate, in 620 A.D Emperor Herodias entered the city carrying the "True cross" taken earlier by the Persians. It was also through this gate way Jesus made His triumphant entry to Jerusalem. This entry was known as Palm Sunday. In early 1500 A.D Ottoman Empire closed this gate permanently. During some early excavations, in 1960 A.D the until of the early gate was discovered below the present gate dating from 165 B.C. This Golden gate was referred to in the book of Nehemiah as the place of the last judgment.

DOME OF THE ROCK:

Within that tomb lies the Rock the Jews claim. According to their faith Abraham sacrificed his son Isaac on that rock which was covered by the tomb. But the Muslims believe that it was the Rock from which their prophet Muhammad took his night journey to heaven. The Dome measures about 64 feet in diameter and it was richly decorated ceilings reflected the beautiful art of Islam. This sacred rock was surrounded by Mahagony barrier. It was built in 691 A.D by Abdul Malik, and it had undergone many external restorations. The newly gold gilded dome was the gift from the late king Hussein of Jordan 1994..

TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS

The Jewish scholars happened to put together the twelve minor prophets in a single volume. As a result, the chronological order of the prophets as a whole seemed to have broken up. The three greater prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are in correct order of the time they lived. Daniel began to prophecy before Ezekiel but continued many years even after him. We can see in the Bible that Daniel prophesied and served under four kings starting with Nebuchadnezzar. The arrangement of the twelve minor prophets by the Jewish scholars is in a sense chronological, that is, they put the earlier prophets in the beginning and the later prophets at the end of the collection. It does not appear that they intended to follow the order of time with proper collection. Had they done so, then in the judgment of many, they would have committed an error.

With regard to the first six prophets, the arrangement of the Septuagint differs from the Masoretic, which is followed in our version in the following manner:

MASORETIC TEXT :	SEPTUAGINT VERSION :
1. Hosea	7. Nahum
2. Joel	8. Habakkuk (Habacuc)
3. Amos	9. Zephaniah (Sophonias)
4. Obadiah (Abdias)	10. Haggai (Aggeas)
5. Jonah (Jonas)	11. Zechariah (Zacharias)
6. Micah (Michaas)	12. Malachi (Malachias)

This wonderful collection contained the earliest as well as the latest writings of those Hebrew prophets. Some of them are embodied in historical books like Hosea, Joel, and Amos who were treated as older than Isaiah and also those three prophets of restoration are younger than Ezekiel and Daniel. Those minor prophets, in their contribution, exhibited a great diversity of manner and style. In their style, some of the passages reached the point of sublimity of Isaiah, the

tenderness and pathos of Jeremiah and the vehemence of Ezekiel. We cannot find sin anywhere rebuked with more awful severity. But the true meaning of the law was made clearly expounded or the future glory of Zion more confidently predicted.

At the same time, some of the writings seemed to be obscure and made with difficult interpretations, and this truth cannot be ignored. The difference partly arises from the character of the style we can find in the case of Hosea and others, partly from the nature of subjects, discussed as in Zechariah, partly from our ignorance of times and circumstances of the writers. In spite of all these variations, prayerful readers will find in them a treasure of divine truth and glory, which will be abundantly awarded for the labor bestowed upon it.

These prophets in the Bible are called “Minor Prophets” but their prophetic contribution was not minor, even though their books contained less number of pages or chapters. The words they used in their writings were with divine guidance and with full of light. When we walk in the darkness, they are good companions, when we are in the barren desert. So they may be called by some commentators as Minor Prophets, but their books are not minor for the valuable matter they contained. We have 12 such Minor Prophets with powerful messages in the Bible.

They are according to their lifetime Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The books of all these prophets are called small only in manner words or pages but not for the matter they contained. For example, the books of prophet Isaiah or Jeremiah or Ezekiel are no doubt are with many chapters and many pages. The Bible is with 66 books, out of which the book of Jeremiah is considered to be second largest one, whereas the books of Ezekiel and Isaiah are treated as the third and the fifth largest. Largeness of a book here is taken based on the number of words in a particular book in its original language. For instance the book of Isaiah has 66 chapters and 37,044 words. The book of Jeremiah has 52 chapters and 42,659 words, and the book of Ezekiel has 48 chapters and 39,407 words. Among the Minor Prophets there are four shortest books in the Old Testament. They are the book of Obadiah which contains 291 words, the book of Nahum 558 words, Haggai 600 words and Jonah 688 words.

It is really interesting to note here, though the book of Daniel contains

only 11,606 words, he secured the status of a major prophet. Daniel's designation as a major prophet was the result of the economy of the message from his book. The message of Daniel is undoubtedly a stunning panorama of future world history. In addition to that the marvelous and most wonderful 9th chapter in his book is often refers to as the bedrock of prophecy. In the same way, we must take into account the messages of all the Minor Prophets. Their prophetic messages are also very important, but they are presented in fewer words than their counterparts. And also the 12 Minor have dealt with miner topics only.

For instance, if we take the book of Hosea, he took the issue of national and individual condemnation of sin. To speak in chronological terms he sits on the tip of the ice-berg. Here is a sample of fire and brimstone problems address by the next 11 prophets.

What are the main problems or issues tackled by these Minor Prophets? They are mentioned below according to chronological order.

- 1) Joel - He dealt with locust's invasion, worldwide judgment, at the end of the age and the redemption of the nation of Israel.
- 2) Amos - He tackled the problems of national and personal corruptions and consequently punishment and redemption.
- 3) Obadiah - He dealt in his book the results of pride, cruelty and the paying of ultimate price for both.
- 4) Jonah - His disobedience to God, and His words. The intolerance and extreme stubbornness.
- 5) Micah - His message is concerned to the evil lying, spiritual leaders and the coming of the King Messiah.
- 6) Nahum - His book dealt with God's religious indignation and destruction of the wicked.
- 7) Habakkuk - He dealt with the issues of God's strange workings, questioning. His will and the sovereignty of God.
- 8) Zephaniah - His main theme is the day of the Lord that reminds people for repentance and God's salvation to all His people.
- 9) Haggai - He tackled with the people of self – centered neglecting the word of God, and promised blessings for obedience.
- 10) Zechariah - He dealt with internal fighting's, indifference, devastating, destruction and future glory.

11) Malachi - He tackled the problems of robbing, God's religious corruption and fear of the Lord.

Though they are treated as Minor Prophets whatever they dealt with two Millennia ago, their words and thoughts speak volumes even today. In fact, there are some relevant portions of Hosea Amos and Micah for us today. For instance Hosea tells the sinful Jewish pagan worshippers of Israelites of Northern kingdom.

"Hear the words of the Lord, ye children of Israel. For the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land because there is no truth nor mercy nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying and killing and stealing and community adultery they break out and blood toucheth blood". (Hosea 4.1-2)

Amos also felt the inequities in the life of ancient Israelites, and wrote these lines "Ye that put far away the evil day and cause the seat of violence to come near. That lie upon the beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches and eat lambs out of the flock and calves out of the midst of stall. That chant to the sound of viol and invent to themselves instrument of music like Davis. That drink wine in bowels and anoint themselves with chief ointments but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (that is Northern Israel). (Amos 6.3-6)

It seems some of the above mentioned passages may require a little creative interpretation we can imagine, "beds of ivory" can become "kings sized beds with satin sheets", "eat the lambs and calves" can be treated as "George ourselves in the most expensive food" and chant to the sound of the viol (a stringed instrument) can be read as, we surrounded ourselves with one computer, flat serums, smart phones and a variety of entertainments. Practically speaking there is nothing wrong in enjoying the provision of god inherently. What Amos wanted to say actually through this wonderful passage was that he was more worried for the people, who were living lavishly by remaining far away from God, and God was not punishing such people for their grievous sin and corruption. According to Amos the ancient Israelites of his time enjoyed their lives luxuriously like the present people.

The next prophet, Micah who lives in the same period of Hosea, wanted to express his mind, "woe to them that devise inequity and work evil upon their beds when the morning is light, they practice it because it is in the power of

their hand. As they covet fields and take them by violence and houses and take them away. So, they oppress a man and his house even a man his heritage. (Micah 1-2)

In fact, what is said by Micah in the above lines regarding wickedness and inequity, we can find them around us today. Hosea, Amos and Micah lived about 2,800 years ago, but what was written by them about the way of the life of Israelites was simply echoing in the present day society. Their wonderful messages even touch our hearts and souls as if they are fresh warning to all believers to repent for the first time. It may be good to apply some of the lessons of the minor prophets to our daily lives; but let us not compare much the ancient life of Israelites with the modern countries like America and mess the historical and prophetic implications.

Israel was a “covenant” nation which means she and God had an argument on certain things and God would bless the nation if the people remain obedient to Him, if not punish them. When we want to look into the books and the contents, we must keep in mind the time, when those books were written and other conditions at that time. So, basing on the environmental position, Amos wrote his book. Amos really condemned those people who without mind wished for the easy way of living; while all around them and their nation is boiling in a cauldron of sin. But one thing we have to remember in this context that is the words. Sentences would not give the idea of modern life. So, it is better if the reading must read the passages slowly and thoughtfully to get the inner meaning of the passages of the prophets contained. Whether the meaning of them has any reference to the present day life or whether the passages have relation with our life or whether God wanted to say anything concerning our life or whether there are any important Prophetic complications for the future life of Israelites. The words of the passage may appear strange, but the passage is a current as if it is written just at that time.

Let us continue our looking into the passages of other Minor Prophets of Israel. As a matter of fact, the books contain very less number of pages and do not require more time to go through them. If anybody likes the Bible, the inspired word of God, he will certainly find his pilgrimage into these fascinating and attractive landscapes which would provide intellectual food and other most interesting things which may change one's life.

HOSEA

Hosea means “Salvation”. He wrote his book in between 735 –710 B.C. Hosea was a contemporary of Amos, Micah and Isaiah. He showed his thoughts in his little book. The unfaithfulness of Israelites to God and their idol worship particularly the Canaanite fertility god Baal. Israel’s pride and depending on her own military powers as well as its alliances with other heathen nations made God to take some action on His people. God’s punishment His faithfulness and His redemption plan all these points wonderfully described by Hosea. Prophet Hosea started his ministry in the later part of very long reign of King Jeroboam of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. These two kingdoms experienced a wonderful progress in the field of sin, from the time of king Solomon.

But those progressive days had gone. The main reason for this change was nothing but spiritual adultery. That is, the Israelites of Northern kingdom became idol worshippers due to the influence of king Jeroboam. They followed the neighboring nations in that idol worship of heathen gods like fBaal. The sin committed by Israelites was beyond comprehension and God who had “birthed” the nation and raised it into a mighty people. God has been patient with His spiritually wandering children all the while, but now He lost all His patience. Then it became the duty and responsibility of Hosea to condemn the great sin of the Israelites and preach for repentance. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thou that thou shalt be no priest to me seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God. and I will also forget thy children”. (Hosea 4.6) For, I desired mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. (Hosea 6.6)

“Ye have planned wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity, ye have eaten the fruit of lies because thou didst, trust in thy way in the multitude of thy mighty men”. (Hosea 10.13) Some of the passages of Hosea had references in the New Testament also.

Hosea 2.23 (Romans 9.25-28)

Hosea 6.6 (Matthew 9.13; 12.7)

Hosea 10.8 (Luke 23.30, Revelation 6.16)

Hosea (Matthew 2.15)

Hosea 13.14 (1 Corinthians 15.55)

The book of Hosea completely dealt with the life of Northern Israelites with full details. If we go back to the beginning of Israel's history. God spoke to His chosen people through Moses the servant of God. "Turn ye not unto idols nor make to yourselves molten gods. I am the Lord your God". (Leviticus 19.4) Again He said, "ye shall make you no idols nor grave image neither rear you up on standing image, neither shall ye set up any image id stone in your land to bow down unto it for I am the Lord your God". God loved His people so much that He endured Israelites sin for centuries. But finally He lost all His patience. As a result He sent Hosea to remind them their doom was ahead.

Before we go deep into the message of Hosea, there is God's shocking command to the prophet. God asked Hosea, "God take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms for the land hath committed a great whoredom departing from the Lord". (Hosea 1.2). It is really very difficult to understand the plans of God, that He would instruct His people to marry a harlot or an adultery woman. In this context some scholars gave their opinion regarding Gomer Hosea's wife. She married him as a chaste woman but later turned to commit adultery without earning for the importance of marriage. God used the life of Hosea as an example, to Israelites immorality and spiritual adultery. There is no reason to believe the story of Hosea and Gomer as the text gives no hints to this Their marriage was real. At the same time, we have to understand the pain or mental agony Hosea must have experienced in his heart.

The heartache of Hosea mirrored the heartache of the Lord caused by His people's adultery way of life. We were not told correctly where Hosea made his prophecies but two or three were made at the followership market place of the city of Samaria particularly near the temple of Baal. The worship of Baal was a wicked thing and added to that the shrine prostitution was continued, which was most abominous to God. In that place men and women sexually engage themselves by paying money to the priests and priestesses for the purpose of granting the fertility god to grant them wishes. Their wishes were, for children, for abundant crop and good health. In such strange circumstances, Hosea was entrusted the responsibility by God to preach His word boldly to the Israelites who forgot the God of their forefathers and became blind with evil spirit. He started his message with thundering voice that there was no truth, no mercy nor the knowledge of God in that land. This is really a wonderful statement, how the Lord had taken a great pain to make Himself known to His own

people. God had done so, by establishing the order of priests and Levites. He raised the prophets and started sacrificial system just for the purpose of the reflection of ugliness of sin (as demonstrated the slaughter of innocent animals).

God wanted to use the service of the prophets to bring change in the attitude of Israelites to look toward seeking mercy and forgiveness for their unlimited transgressions. Since the minds of Israelites over powered by the idol worship, the knowledge of God had vanished from their minds that is, they completely forgot about the heavenly father. As they disowned God, they fell into grievous sin. Their other activities were like swearing, lying, stealing, killing, blood toucheth bloodshed upon bloodshed, and physical adultery. (Hosea 4.2)

God with all His patience continued to rule firmly. Even then, when they went out of control in their day to day life. He had to take some steps to control them. He wanted to correct them but prior to that He wanted to warn them. In the 5th chapter prophet Hosea accused Israelites for indulging themselves too much in idolatry Again in the 6th chapter, he encouraged them to seek God with repentance. The prophet gave Israelites even some words to say, “for he hath torn for he will heal us he hath smitten and he would blind us up”. (Hosea 6.1)

Unfortunately, the Israelites of 740 B.C had forgotten totally the word “god” itself. This condition gave chance to God to inflict some punishment on them. God said, “woe unto them for they have fled from me, destruction unto the, because they have transgressed against me, though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken his against me”. (Hosea 7.13) There is still time for Northern Israelites to repent. In chapter 8 God again reminded them of their crimes and wished to postpone the punishment. God had proclaimed and gave to the people of Israel every opportunity to repent. Prophet Hosea also declared “ I have written to him (Israel) the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing”. (Hosea 8.12) To say correctly it is as if the Lord is saying, I have graciously given you, My just good and righteous law, but you disdain it. You choose evil over good, dark over light, death over life. The saddest commentary of the entire book is the indictment of Israel in 8.14. for Israel hath forgotten her maker.

So as to change the mind of Israelites and turn them toward him. God had decided to check them and inflict with simple punishment and the nature of it was on the nation's economy and daily diet that is reduction prove disastrous. This could not change the attitude of Israelites, because they became hard nuts

to crack. Even then, when people would go too far astray in their sin. God set in and pull on the reins for controlling, but never without first warning. Such was the position Israelites at that time. So Hosea said, “Ye have plowed wickedness, ye reaped inequity, ye have eaten the fruit of lies, because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men”. (Hosea 10.13)

All of sudden the Lord amazingly revealed Himself and His tender heart toward His a people He knew He had to judge His people severely but it is unfortunate. “How shall I give thee up Ephraim?” (Ephraim is author name for Northern kingdom) how shall I deliver thee Israel? My heart is turned within me, my repentances and kindled together. (Hosea 11.8) In spite of the Lord’s impassioned argument, the children of God would not listen to him. Instead of remaining obedient to the Almighty God they committed more and more unpardonable sins. They began to worship the molten images made of themselves according to their own understanding. The father’s argument became futile and unchecked by His evil children.

The Lord could not help but bring His people from the wrong track into the correct way. He would follow their chastisement and take it upon Himself to achieve the noble work of forgiveness and restoration. He says about His wandering but beloved children, “I will heal their backsliding; I will love them truly, for mine anger is turned away from him (Israel) (Hosea 14.4). Hosea tried his best by all means to change the stiff necked Israelites but in vain. He did not find even an iota of the spirit of repentance. His impassioned messages could not meet the hardened hearts of those people. In the Northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C and took many of them as exiles, and many other fled to different places in fear. That is to say God handed over them to pagan Assyrian rulers as a punishment. Perhaps after this tragedy the identity of Israelites was almost forgotten, and a few people out of which came the Samaritans. So to say the Samaritans were cross breed of pagan Assyrians and some Israelite women. That is the reason why the Jews used to look down upon the Samaritans whenever they come across.

Let us think for a while how far the little book of Hosea influenced our day to day life apart from the life of Israelites of Northern kingdom, particularly regarding our sin. Some passages from that book suggest us to take some haste steps to control our sin, through the power of Jesus Christ. If we commit sin at any unguarded moments, God would certainly forgive us, if we go to Him and

pray with repentance and broken heart. The kind of life was led by Israelites during the time of Hosea could be seen at present in some of the advanced countries like America. So, what is the moral we can pick up through this episode. What we need urgently is not to think much about the material things, but to spare more time to think about God and our salvation; because we have to live with Him forever after our death.

We are like travelers in this material world and reach our destination finally, which is heaven. We can achieve anything with constant prayer and with this we can become closer to God. Though there are some people still obedient to God, their number is also decreasing from time to time, because of the advanced technology and luxurious life. So what was said by Hosea about 2,700 years ago, in connection with the life of Israelites, was quite conspicuous among the people of some countries today. He said, “.....There is no truth nor mercy nor knowledge of God, in the land” (Hosea 4.1) “My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him”. (Hosea 9.17)

God made Hosea a distinguished person among the other Minor Prophets. He introduced into the personal life of Hosea by commanding him to marry “a wife of whoredom” (1.2) there is no doubt that Gomer’s past adulterous life caused him heart-breaking. But in the same proportion God strengthened Hosea to stand boldly. There was a controversial opinion of some scholars about the birth of three children to Gomer. They pointed out that the first child “Jezreel” was a true son of Hosea born to Gomer. But the other two children, Lo Ruhamah a daughter and Lo Ammi a son were born to her in her adulterous life not to Hosea. In such circumstances God gave another shocking command to Hosea, “Go yet love a woman, beloved of her friend (a lover) yet an adulteress according to the love of God, toward His children. Just as God loved His children Israelites, though they were wicked, He loves us also. He always thinks about us only for repentance and live a life of spirituality.

Through the message of Hosea we find the obedient and merciful love of God toward His people. Let us hope, God will certainly continue His love toward Israelites and in future forgive them. God will also love all of us by forgiving all our sins; God is always inviting us with His stretched arms of forgiveness and redemption.

SEVEN WORDS ON THE CROSS

Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross on Friday two thousand years ago. After the crucifixion this day was called “Black Friday” for two centuries, then it became God’s Friday, and now we call it “Good Friday”. The Franciscan church members in Jerusalem used to go in a procession to Golgotha, a place of skull even today by singing songs. Jesus was put on the cross by His own people (Jews) with some false allegations. This cross was first invented by Phoenician tribe and it was used maximum by Emperor Nero, one of the Fifty Four Roman Emperors. The purpose of this cross punishment was that the Roman used to enjoy themselves the long suffering of any victim on the cross. But this cross punishment was abolished permanently by Emperor Constantine, after he became the emperor to the Eastern part of Roman Empire which was also called Byzantine empire and today we call it modern Turkey. The significance of Good Friday is, one man, two wooden pieces, three nails, four Gospels, five wounds, six hours and seven words.

One may meditate on the passion of Christ by reflecting on His seven words on the cross, or by a devotion known as the way of the cross. The religious pilgrimages were stopped to the Holy land due to military occupation of Jerusalem during the middle Ages, a popular devotion known as the way of the cross during “Lent Season” the passion, crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. The way Jesus Christ walked with the cross on His shoulders was called via dolorosa which means “the way of sorrow” and it was divided into fourteen stations of the cross.

THEY ARE...

- 1) Pontius Pilot condemned Jesus to death.
- 2) Jesus took up His cross.
- 3) He fell down for the first time.
- 4) Jesus met His sorrowful mother Mary.
- 5) Simon helped to carry His cross.
- 6) Veronica cleaned the face of Jesus Christ with a piece of cloth.
- 7) Jesus fell down for the second time.
- 8) Jesus controlled the women of Jerusalem.
- 9) Jesus fell down for the third time.

- 10) Jesus was stripped off His clothes by Roman Soldiers.
- 11) Jesus was nailed to the cross.
- 12) Jesus Christ died on the cross.
- 13) He was taken down from the cross.
- 14) He was laid in the tomb.

THE SEVEN WORDS CHRIST SPOKE ON THE CROSS ARE...

- 1) “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do”. (Luke 23.34)
This is a word of Forgiveness.
- 2) “Truly I say unto you, today you will be with me in paradise”. (Luke 23.43) This is the word of Salvation.
- 3) Woman, Behold your son, Behold your mother (John 19.26-27) the word of relationship.
- 4) My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Matthew 27.46; Mark 15.34) it means Abandonment.
- 5) I thirst, it speaks about Distress. (John 19.28)
- 6) It is finished (John 19.29-30) word of reunion.
- 7) Father into your hands I commit my spirit (Luke 23.46) the word of Triumph.

If we look into the list mentioned above, we can understand that all the seven words are not written in one Gospel, regarding His crucifixion. They are from the four Gospels. In the Gospels Matthew and Mark Jesus is quoted in the Aramaic language. Then in Luke's Gospel we can find the first, the second and the seventh words. The third fifth and sixth are in the Gospel of John.

1) THE FIRST WORD FROM THE CROSS:

“Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23.34)

According to the traditions the first word on the cross is called “The word of Forgiveness”. Jesus prayed to His father God for the forgiveness of all those who were really responsible for crucifying Him. What made the Jews to kill their own man Jesus on the cross? There are three sects among the Jews. The first one is called Orthodox Jews who gave more importance to Torah and the five books of Prophet Moses called “Pentateuch”. They have another sacred book

“Talmud” which they followed more. They believed in Monotheism which means one God. They taught their children also to say, “O Israel our Lord is God, our God is one”. The Jews were with such mental setup at that time, when Jesus was sent by God Father to this world with some purpose. God sent Jesus to fulfill three purposes. They were to heal the sick, to spread the word of God and to sacrifice His life to redeem the sinners of the world. Then in His teachings and preaching’s. He used to say He was the Son of God, He was the Messiah whatever He said it is not His words but the word of his father God. Such kind of saying made the Jews angry and called Him a Blasphemer. They framed some more false allegations and he was finally taken to the cross.

Pontius Pilot seemed to have tried three times to save Jesus, but in vain. He did not say even a single word, at the time of His trial. Finally the Roman soldiers put Him on the cross and nailed Him. Then He was hanging between heaven and the earth. The cross of Jesus Christ is the corner stone for Christian Faith. With unimaginable pain and woozing of blood. He looked around; he saw the Roman soldiers nearest to the cross and casting lots of His cloths. He saw the teachers who hated Him. He saw the priests, who bought Jesus for 30 silver pieces from His traitor disciple Judas Iscoriot. He saw the fickle minded crowd, that once shouted on palm Sunday, Hosanna to the son of David, while He was entering the city of Jerusalem. The same crowd now shouting crucify Him. He saw His disciples at a distance, who walked with Him, who were with Him for three years now deserted Him, and trying to disown Him. They could not make a simple protest at least for the protest sake in favour of their rabbini. He remembered the part played by Pontius pilot and king Herod also.

Why all the people were against Jesus at that time because they were made blind by the power of evil and corrupted by sin. They wanted to join their hands with Satan and attack violently the purity and Holiness of God. They lost their rational thinking. Their minds became blunt. They did not realize the importance of crucifixion. They did not understand the value of His blood. They did not understand the power of resurrection. Christ understood all this. He pitied them. He had compassion for them. Then He prayed to God, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do”. While praying He declared His relationship with God by calling Him father. Then, He prayed an unselfish prayer. He did not say from the cross “I will forgive you”. But He gave priority to

His father God. He prayed to His father for forgiveness of the Roman soldiers. He prayed to His father for the forgiveness of the preachers and teachers that ill-treated Him. He prayed for the fickle minded multitude. He prayed for His disciples. Finally He prayed for all those who were responsible for His crucifixion, and He prayed for our individual forgiveness also.

If we look into the Bible the first Christian martyr was Stephen. We all know he was stoned to death miserably. Before his death, he prayed to God, "Lord do not hold this sin against them". Perhaps he wanted to pray to God to forgive them though they were killing him. In 1 John 1.9 it is said, "If we confess our sins before God, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins, and purify us from all unrighteousness. In Mark 11.26 it is said, "If we forgive our trespassers. The father in heaven will forgive us our trespassers". Once Peter asked Jesus whether he should forgive the sins of his brother seven times. Jesus replied, he should forgive a sinner not seven times, but seventy times and seven. (Matthew 18.22). With this information and the references from the Bible, we can understand the theme of this topic "Forgiveness". So on this good Friday the gift of the cross is forgiveness. The cross of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone for Christian faith. Forgiveness is the Hallmark of Christianity. Forgiveness is the most requisite qualification for a true Christian. So, let us keep the cross on our shoulders and walk on the narrow path of forgiveness toward salvation. Let us be practical minded in observing forgiveness in our daily life.

2) "TODAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE" (LUKE 23.43)

Jesus said these words to the criminal, who was hanging on the right side, of Him. Truly, I say unto you, today you will be with me in "paradise". This word is called traditionally "The word of salvation". Salvation was granted to the criminal who repented at the last minute. Jesus was brought to Golgotha and put on the cross. Many people gathered there like, the proud, the unrighteous the scoffers and the mockers. Jesus was hanging between two criminals namely "Dismas and Gertas". The right side criminal spoke with Jesus with open heart. He confessed his sin and his unworthiness.

Martin Luther a reformist said, "In the garden Jesus was comforted by an angel but on the cross by a murderer, who was hanging beside Him. God allowed His son to be comforted by a criminal. There was joy in heaven over the repentance

of that sinner. Though he spent all his life, in crimes, he was rewarded a great reward, for all his criminal deeds. As a matter of fact, that thief never heard of God or Scriptures or never attended any church in his life. He knew nothing about Christian way of life. Yet he turned toward Jesus, and asked to remember him when he would go to His kingdom. Protestant Christians may use this statement "Today you will be with me in paradise". These words give the assurance of direct voyage to heaven. But catholic would find more stress, "I say today you shall be with me in paradise". This expression shows that the statement is made today, and his going to heaven may be later.

While Jesus was hanging on the cross, the Roman soldiers and priests mocked at Him, and the criminal hanging at His left mocked at Him. The right side criminal understood Jesus correctly, and said Jesus was an innocent man and nothing wrong He has done. He had wonderful faith on Jesus and became a repentant sinner. He proved himself far better than doubting Thomas one of His disciples. Jesus forgot His pain at that time and repented with love and mercy. "You will be with me in paradise". He showed the thief His divine power by opening heaven. He showed His generosity who asked only to remember him. This simple expression would give us hope for salvation, if we turn our hearts to Jesus.

If at all there is any commentary on the fact, that salvation is by grace though faith without deeds of law here is one. The gift of salvation is not earned but it is given. Jesus said to the penitent thief, "Verily, I say unto thee. Today thou shall be with me in paradise". Today he is with Jesus in paradise. The death of saints is really a blessed one. The breath, and depth of the grace of God, is very great. Let us not think seriously or wonder how this evil man could be shown such grace; But let us think God, that grace is so rich even it includes the murderer.

3) BEHOLD YOUR SON, BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER (JOHN 19.26-27) :

Jesus saw His own mother Mary and beloved disciple John standing near whom He loved most. He said to His mother "woman behold your son". Then He said to His disciple John "Behold your mother". And John from that hour onwards took His mother into his family. The traditional meaning of this word into his family "The word of Relationship". After Jesus put His mother in the

care of John He became free and now hanging on the cross between heaven and earth. Then with unbearable pain and woozing of blood, He looked around. He saw only John and the others were standing at a distance trying to hide themselves from the presence of Jesus. He was kept on the cross almost naked, suffering from severe pain. Even in that condition He thought about the welfare of His mother after His death. This word, “Behold your son, Behold your mother” shows the humanity of Jesus and the depth of His love toward His mother.

Jesus and Mary were together at the beginning of His ministry in Cana; and now at the end of His public ministry at the foot of the cross. He referred her as a woman at the wedding feast of Cana (1 John 2.1-11) and in this passage. He recalled the woman in Genesis 3.15 the first messianic prophecy of the redeemer and the anticipating woman clothed with the sun in Revelation 12. There were four people at the foot of the cross at that time. They were Mary mother of Jesus. John His beloved disciple, Mary Clopes his mother’s sister, and Mary Magdalene. St. Joseph was not noticeable in that arena of the crucifixion. The historical paintings of Tondodoni by Michelangelo and the Holy family by Raphael suggest that Joseph was normally an old man or he must have died already by the time. Jesus was put on the cross. But it became a controversial point to discuss, whether Mary’s husband was alive at the time of the crucifixion or whether Mary had other children along with Jesus.

The sound of evil voices mocked at her son, and the other insults Jesus faces, touched the heart of His mother. The prophecy of Simeon who said And Simeon blessed them and said unto Mary, His mother, “Behold this child is set for fall and rising again at many in Israel and for a sign, which shall be spoken against (yea a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also) that the truth of many hearts may be revealed (Luke 2.24-35). The name “Mary” means “bitter” by standing near the cross Mary tasted the bitterness of her helplessness as a mother. She wanted to save her son from such calamities, but in vain. She also tried to suffer on behalf of her son, that also became impossible Jesus did not forget His mother till the last minute. He provided another son to take care of her till the last days. He was John, his disciple. Jesus called His mother woman, and not mother because He wanted her think of Him, in relation to His atonement, rather than in a narrow thinking of family relationship. Mary

understood the mind of her son and went to John to stay with him. The persecution continued even after the death of Jesus and so both John and Mary went to Ephesus and settled there permanently.

4) MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME? (MATTHEW 227.46)

Jesus shouted around the ninth hour in a loud voice saying, “Eli Eli lama Sabachthanic” which means My God, my God why have you forsaken me. This is in (Mark 15.34). this is the only word that appeared in more than one Gospel and King David called (Psalms 22.1). This word was considered by some commentators as an abandonment of son by the Father (God). Some theologians have understood the cry of Jesus on the cross was really the cry of human who felt he was forsaken. He was put to death by His own people. He was left by His father and also deserted by His disciples, who walked with Him, and ate with Him for three years were now hiding themselves to avoid hm. Though they walked with Jesus, ate with Him and slept with Him, were now forgot Him completely and behaved as strangers. He who died at Golgotha was one with the Father that God was in Christ and at the same time He cried out the Father.

The time was ninth hour means three O’ clock in Judea. This cry was from the painful heart of the human Jesus Christ, who must have felt, he was deserted by the father the Holy Spirit, and the earthly companions the Apostles. So, He felt helplessness in His loneliness and by the absence of his disciples He felt like that. They could not make a simple protest, at least for protest sake in favor of their Rabbinic. As all deserted Him, He had to face lonely death. Jesus completely left this human experience as we do and by doing so, He would free us from the clutches of sin.

The fourth word spoken on the cross would reflect the reality of the Father. He actually sent His son into this world to redeem us from our sin which has been continued from the time of our first parents Adam and Eve. So as to redeem us from our sin, Jesus was born spotless to virgin Mary. As true Christians, we in faith believe that the Father forsook His son in order that all who believe in Him might have daily assurance in life and at the time of death the Father will not forsake us. So, we must be always thankful to God, the Father, and to His son, the savior Jesus Christ; and to the Spirit for giving us the faith to be what is really beyond comprehension.

5) "I THIRST" (JOHN 4.19-28) :

Jesus Christ thought on the cross that all the issues were accomplished and the Scriptures might be fulfilled. Then He said, "I thirst". This word is traditionally called, "The word of Distress". This word is compared and contrasted with His meeting of Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob where He asked for water as He was thirsty. (John 4.4-26). Because He was hanging for a long time on the cross, and loosing of blood, and sweating, Jesus became dehydrated. He did not eat or drink anything after the last supper in the previous night. So, He was suffering from severe pain and thirsty. The Gospel writers said some one offered a drink to Jesus sour wine. But, John particularly said that a man placed a sponge dipped in wine on a hyssop branch and held it to the lips of Jesus. According to Biblical history, hyssop played very important role in the Old Testament and in the "book of Hebrews". Only this fifth word Jesus spoke from the cross as the son of man, an ordinary human being, because of His intense physical suffering. He was shocked at the wounds inflicted on His body. His crowning of thorns on His head, and the nailing Him in the cross, caused severe pain prior to this He happened to walk for three hours with cross through the city of Jerusalem to the place of skull called Golgotha added more pain to the above said treatment. So in the 1 Peter it is said, "He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed". (1 Peter 2.24)

It is said, "I am weary of my crying my throat is dried, mine eyes fail, while I wait for my God; And hide not thy face from thy servant for I am in trouble hear me speedily". (Psalm 69.3) My soul thirsts for God for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? (Psalms 42.2) So, if we want to know the enormity of sin, we must sit at the foot of the cross, and then remember the above said words from Psalms. Those words are nothing but the reflection of the suffering of our Lord Jesus. When He was offered to drink of myth and gall. He refused to receive it. That clearly shows, He was in full control of Himself, and in His senses to drink the cup of suffering to its fullest. With that only, He thought He could satisfy the demands of the law which pronounced death upon the sinner.

Had Jesus suffered less than that the fallen man of sin would have been still under the same threat of the condemnation of eternal death, with all its indescribable horror and suffering to the maximum and paid the required price of penalty for our sin. He remained in control of everything in order so that the scriptures might be fulfilled. He said “I thirst”. The thirst He felt was not uncommon to anyone in such circumstances. His thirst was more than a dry throat. He was thirsty for those whom He said to come to Him and drink of refreshing water of salvation. Prophet Isaiah in his prophecy said in chapter 53, “He shall see of the travails of his soul and shall be satisfied”.

After the constant suffering of His soul the savior found satisfaction in every soul that has been redeemed and that has by faith felt salvation in Him can we by walking with Him with his cross on our shoulders to satisfy the thirst of our savior by saying with David, I stretch forth my hands unto thee, my soul thirsts after thee as a thirsty lands”. (Psalms 143.6)

6) IT IS FINISHED – JOHN 19.30 :

God sent His son Jesus into this world to fulfill three things. To heal the sick, to spread God’s word throughout the world and to sacrifice His life to redeem the sinners. He completed all of them so He said “it is finished”. The meaning of this word traditionally called “Triumph”. And it is interpreted theologically as the announcement of the end of the earthly life of Jesus Christ in anticipation of Resurrection. These words indicate the cry of victory Jesus had fulfilled for what purpose He came. He succeeded in His plan and salvation was made for all of us, though the unbearable suffering on the cross. He proved His love. As He said, “It is finished” with the above said words He was considered the noblest person, who walked on the surface of the planet, who was God in flesh and blood and who breathed His last on this earth.

It is finished, that means everything has been accomplished for which He came from His Father God as revealed in the scripture. Everything was foretold what was necessary for our salvation. Our savior said, “It is finished”. Let us try to understand what the exact meaning of the word “finished” here was. By sacrificing His life on the cross, Jesus paid full price of our salvation. Before this Jesus said to His disciples “Behold we go up to Jerusalem and all things that are written concerning the son of man shall be accomplished” (Luke 18.3). It is



5. JONAH (Jonas)



6. MICAH (Michaels)



7. NAHUM



8. HABAKKUK (Habacuc)



1. HOSEA



2. JOEL



3. AMOS



4. OBADIAH (Abdias)



9. ZEPHANIAH (Sophonius)



10. HAGGAI (Aggeas)



11. ZECHARIAH (Zacharias)



12. MALACHI (Malachias)

finished explains us that Jesus is true to His word. We are all redeemed with His precious blood on the cross. We believe the word of Jesus and trust Him once and for all – completed atonement, are numbered among those to whom psalm 22 makes a reference. A seed shall save him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born that he had done this. (Psalms 22.30-31)

The faith that saves us is not built upon personal effort. It is done only through Christ. But those people made Christ a liar, a blasphemer, being an ordinary person in flesh and blood and who does sin every day. It is finished with the belief the child of God, respects the word. He will give Christ and His cross due honour. In this context Martin Luther said “My penitent tears do not justify me, Christ alone has taken away my sins. He cast them into the sea of forgetfulness. This is my defense a defense which rests upon, it is finished people generally appreciate any art, do not add another brush stroke to the painting of a master, because it is certainly beyond our imagination. Then why should the sinner for whom Jesus died and for the sake of whom, He declared it is finished. He declared because, He accomplished the purpose of His coming into this world. He provided to all of us salvation and with that He completed His mission. “For by grace, are ye, saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, Not of works”. (Ephesians 2.8-9)

7) FATHER INTO YOUR HANDS, I COMMIT MY SPIRIT LUKE 23.46 :

Jesus spoke this last word on the cross saying “Father into your hands, I commit my spirit”. This can be also found in Psalms 31.5. It is like an announcement, but not like a request. It is traditionally called “The word of reunion “. It is theologically interpreted as a proclamation of the journey of Jesus with His Father in heaven. When darkness surrounds anybody, it takes even faith to talk with God. These last words spoken by Jesus on the cross show His absolute trust in God. So, He said, “Father into your hands I commit my spirit”. This appears to be the best example of prayer that every Christian should try to follow if any one of the family falls sick, or in dangerous position or facing one’s own death. So, we have to say I commend myself, into your hands, for my safety.

This seventh word is taken from the Gospel of Luke and it is addressed to God Father directly who is in heaven; just before His death. Jesus recalled Psalms 31.5 “into thy hand I command my spirit”, thou hast redeemed me O lord, faithful God. Luke repeatedly pleaded about the innocence of Jesus with pilot through “Dismas”, who was also hanging along with Him and immediately after His death; with the centurion. And this centurion also said, Jesus was an innocent man. He fulfilled His Mission, of coming into this world; people were justified by His grace, as a gift through the redemption wishes is in Christ Jesus.

The relationship of Jesus with faith is revealed in the Gospel of John for He remarked. “The faith and I are one” and at the last supper”. “Do you not believe I am in the father and the Father is in me”. Jesus also said, “The words I speak to you, I do not speak of my own. The Father who dwells in me doing His work. (John 14.10). I came from the Father, and have come, into this world; again I am leaving this world, and going to the Father”. (John 16.28)

The severity of affliction in this life can never be measured with the suffering of our Lord. Really His suffering was immeasurable. As He died for us we can boldly say Lord give us such a death as this. As true believers of Jesus, let us reconcile with God through the death of Jesus, we have nothing to fear from God. It does not matter, how dreadful our death may be or how desperately we have to struggle between life and death. Now our hearts can be at peace because our Lord promised us, “Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life”. (John 3.16)

It is further said, “My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither any man shall pluck them out of my land. My Father which gave them to me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s land”. (John 10.27-29) And Martin Luther while lying on his death bed said, I pass away, I yield up my spirit. Father unto thy hands. I command my spirit. Thou hast wonderful confession, we may have to make confidently, because our Lord Jesus had fulfilled all for our salvation; commanded Himself and with Himself all His members to the hands of the Father in heaven.....

NEW JERUSALEM OF JESUS CHRIST

“The blessed hope of the church is the second earning of Christ”. (Titus 2.13)

For this topic I have selected the 21st chapter from “the Book of Revelation”. This chapter is so important for all the readers must humbly bow down their heads with due respect to the “Divine author” St. John to grant all of us special wisdom through Jesus Christ, to comprehend his message to the best of our ability. The young believers and readers in faith need not be frustrated or dismayed if they really happened to fail in comprehending the intensity of the passage. As far as I am concerned as a writer, I strongly believe that for teaching or preached or for writing all of us must need the gift and spiritual guidance of our Almighty God.

St. John wrote this chapter with the following words. Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth passed away and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy city the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It was well prepared and beautifully decorated as bride for the wedding. According to the statement of some reputable scientists the heavens are infinite. As there is no beginning there is no end or border or termination point. But in this context, those scientists spoke about three heavens.

THEY ARE -

Atmospheric heaven : In this the air is surrounding the earth, wherein the birds fly; And God said, “And 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)

The second heaven the Bible speaks about is “The Terrestrial heaven”, which is visible sky with the Sun, the Moon and the stars appear. And then God said, “Let there be light in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night, and there be signs and seasons and for days and for years”. The result of this division is God made two lights, the greater light and the lesser light. The greater light would rule the day and the lesser light rule the night. It is really surprisingly understood to Prophet Moses though he lived about 1500 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. He correctly understood the heavenly

bodies were giving to the earth, the seasons, days and years. Moses, the servant of God, must have received that gift of understanding from God Himself. The third heaven is called “The celestial heaven”, which is supposed to be the abode of God. Apostle Paul said in this context, “I know a man in Christ, about 14 years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell or out of the body I cannot tell) as God everything as He is the communicant. Such a one caught up to third heaven”. (2 Corinthians 12.2). The relationship between the earth and the heaven is very broad and substantial, which is not so easy to understand. The most striking point in this regard, that the earth has a little impact on the heaven whereas the heaven has an absolute and intimate impact on the earth.

God, who related the heaven and the earth and everything therein, had a plan to destroy people because they became wicked. If He really wanted to do so, He could do it in no time, just with a word from His mouth. It may not be His intention to wipe out His own creation. But what St. John saw in his vision should be brought into lime light. One point is correct in his dream John saw the passing away of the first heaven and earth; At the same time, we cannot say whether God is really interested in the destruction of both heaven and earth, and recreate new heaven and new earth or renovate the present heaven and the earth. We cannot come to a conclusion with our limited brains, what God has in His mind.

Let us look into the historic events that occurred in the Bible, “Noah’s Flood”. As per the story, we know how the waters of the flood raised higher than the tallest, mountains on the earth. Actually, we have no idea about Noah’s flood because we never came across such terrible event in our lives. But in terms of the new heaven and new earth, we must dramatically elevate our understanding correctly. Therefore with staunch belief, we require strong and unfailing faith in God and His word; and faith should grow like a little sapling that change into a mighty oak tree. We can believe the new heavens and new earth as John saw were not necessarily new with regard to their origin but with due respect to their quality. That is to say, John was beholding the present heaven and earth completely cleansed totally regenerated and with all that thing would become absolutely perfect ones. John was beholding the new heaven and the new earth in all their pristine beauty as Adam and Eve saw in the “Garden of Eden” before the advent of sin and its consequences of curse upon the entire creation.

Let us keep aside these facts for a while and think about heaven which is vague and perfectly understood by us in its true sense whether we are believers or not. A secular song writer suggested that heaven is our eyes which are bright as the stars above our eyes. Another lyric song writer said, we are in heaven when we are all in a dancing program, so closely cheek to cheek of other sea. What the writer really wanted to say here is that, we feel extremely happy when we dance with others. But heaven is not such a place for sensual pleasures.

Heaven is a Holy place, where martyrs wait for the presence of the Almighty God to praise and worship Him. The Hebrew word for heaven is “shamayin”. This particular word has its own importance in the Old Testament because this word, “shamayin” is used about 400 times. As we see the Bible opens with the declaration “In the beginning God created heavens and the earth”. (Genesis 1.1) Both heaven and earth are perfect in the material quoted. God created them and they are frequently standing the physical and spiritual universe is paralleled the earth and sky to certain extent. Heaven is simply defined as the expansion of the space over the sky like a dome. But it is more complex, for the human eye to comprehend.

In the Greek Bible there are two words used for the English word “new”. They are “Nios” and “Kainos”. So when the Bible speaks about the new wine, it seeks the word “Nios” which indicated about this years crop, new with regard to time. The second word “Kainos” is used in the ease of substance and quality superior to the old one. The Lord proposed a new (kainos) covenant far superior in quality to the previous covenant of Moses. (1 Corinthians 11.25, 2 Corinthians 3.6, Hebrew 8.8). Apostle Paul also clearly explained that the believer of Christ was a new (kainos) creation. For the purpose as he was before he became a believer. But after his change, he became qualitatively superior to what he was in his ingenerated condition in Adam. He was called born again and thus a new creation.

When John spoke about new heavens and the new earth, in his vision he used the word kainos and emphasized the quality of new heavens and earth not in time or origin John also pointed out that they were not the same heavens and earth, but cleansed and regenerated from old ones, and thus the old ones were to be purged. During the “Day of the Lord” when the masters hand passes toward both of them, they would become new heavens and earth.

It is not the wrath of God but the persecution of anti-Christ, the progine of Satan from which Israel would be delivered. The “Day of the Lord” would come for a short period of time. And during that short period of time would be blown and seven bowls pair out while interpreting the importance of the 21st chapter from the Book of Revelation. We may find different opinions as many of the Bible readers do. At the same time we must remember the valuable saying “Do not rush in where angels fear to tread”,

As we all know blessings would come down from heaven and from God only. In the same way, the priests in the temples would bless the people and worshippers. The kings would bless their subjects (people). Father would bless his children always even though they don't desire sometimes due to their abnormal behavior. In order to understand the uniqueness of heaven some concepts are quoted below from the Old Testament. Following are some of the opinions about heaven by some God inspired writers and prophets.

- 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 the Earth.
- 9) The lord talks to men on the Earth from heaven.
- 10) The lord opens the windows of heaven to bless the faithful.
- 11) Heaven is the building place of God and angelic beings.
- 12) The Lord judges His people 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 which we call the past, present and future are all known to Him.
- 26) The God of heaven sets up a kingdom that will never be destroyed.
- 27) The God of heaven is omnipotent.

Men may choose to oppose the God of heaven but they do so at great peril.

As I quoted above, we can find hundreds of such 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 is going to 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 will 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 will sit under his own fig tree fully satisfied and fulfilled.

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 warms destroy this body to death, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19. 25-26).

In the New Testament the Greek word used for heaven is “Overanoes” and this word is used about 290 times. From this number about 70 times it is used in the Gospel of Matthew and 55 times in the book of Revelation. So, altogether the Hebrew word “shamayin” 400 times, and “overanoes” 290 times are used for heaven. The total goes up to 690 times. The strong faith of all believers is that they would go to heaven after their death; and only with that faith people embrace Christianity. They also believe that the dead bodies would go into the graves and become dust, and the soul which is called 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 the second coming of Jesus Christ, there will be a resurrection of call those believers who died in faith. The Bible also speaks about the physical body that is kept in the grave which was corruptible and mortal would be resurrected and made incorruptible and immortal. Then it will be united with soul to meet the Lord God in the clouds.

It is said often that the heaven represented as a place where the redeemer will sit on the clouds and play some music..... Christ said, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. Why He said so because of present kingdom of heaven is on earth. There is no doubt; the will of God is done in heaven perfectly. But on earth, the will of God is the vehemently opposed by a demonic host who always served Satan obediently. God asks us always to pray as “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is heaven”. The kingdom of which John the Baptist spoke, the kingdom of heaven which the disciples were taught by Jesus Christ, and the kingdom of which God Himself spoke was prophecised in the Old Testament.

The people who are spiritual minded among us might suggest we shall 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 is only Matthew who used the expression 'the kingdom of God'.

John the Baptist, while giving baptism to different people in the river Jordan 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.

Dr. Henry Morris, a popular commentator in his work. "The Revelation Record" commented on Revelation 21:1 stated that, "The new cosmos (world) is not a novel cosmos, but a renewed cosmos (world). It is similar to the old except that all its aging ravages of decay have been expunged, and now it is made fresh and new again".

According to this wonderful statement, the present heavens and earth are not blotted out, or swifted away into nothingness; but retouched, changed, renovated, cleansed, brightened up and regenerated from all their disorders and imperfections.

Joseph Seiss, another noted commentator pointed out on Revelation in a more classic manner. The words he used while describing new heavens and new earth are more wonderful that they would fill our minds with Inspiration. Although his words were more than a hundred years old, they talked about continuously with eloquence and considerable insight.

Therefore this regeneration of the earth is no longer in proper position because it is under the curse of Sin. The earth which needs no more to be torn with hooks and iron instruments, used for yielding fruits on earth, where thorns and thistles no longer infest the ground. There will be no serpents to hiss among the flowers, and the earth whose soil is never moist with tears or saturated with human blood. The earth, whose fields are never subjected to unprofitable seasons, whose atmosphere never gives wings to the seeds of plague and death. Whose ways and means are never linked with funeral processions or trodden upon with armed men on their way to war, an earth whose hills ever flow with salvation and whose valleys know only the sweetness of Jehovah's smiles. An earth from end to end and from center, to utmost Virge, clothed with the eternal blessedness of paradise restored.

Everything awaits that day with anticipation, so that it may be freed from the curse of sin (Romans 8.19-22). Apostle Paul probably in his first sermon (linked with Christ, return and called restitution of all things) wrote that the Lord Himself spoke on that day while He was conversing with His disciples. He taught them "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel". (Matthew 19.28).

The meaning of the word "regeneration" is "new birth". Apostle Paul used this word particularly for the believers as "new birth". Other commentators suggested that old heavens and old earth said to pass away but the present heavens and earth could not be the new heavens and the new earth. Some critics seemed to overlook the fact that the Greek verb translated into pass away came from the root word "Parerchomai" which may be referred in (Matthew 5.18) with the meaning of "to come, come forth, go, pass, Passover" etc.

Peter also spoke about the elements in heaven melting with fervent heat, and the works of earth being burnt up (2 Peter 3.10). The teaching of God's word is that the reason of fall of man, the present creation is in a sense of captivity. The descending of heavens and earth are not their annihilation but their long awaited deliverance from curse of sin.

God completed His creation of the universe in six days. On the second day, He created the heavens, and created the earth on the third day. The divine

commentary on all that God created was “And God saw everything He made and behold it was very good” (Genesis 1.31). But within a short time Adam and Eve, the first parents, disobeyed the commandment of God and that disobedience upon man, domain, heaven and earth and seas over which He was authorized to reign.

The heavens and the earth which were created “very good” before the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden now became “very bad”. And before their sin, there was no death, disease, war, famine, natural calamities, corruption, hate, rape, pollution and thousand other ills that had plagued men for more than six thousand years according to history. It is really strange that the present heavens and earth are to be dissolved – to be purged by fire during the days of the Lord in order to lose it from the consequences of sin. God would make a way for a new and perfect heaven and earth.

The new heavens and the new earth are a terrible prospect for the unsaved people of the world for all things they posses, including their lives, associated with the present heavens and earth, which are going to be burnt one day (2 Peter 2.10). But for those believers who are made righteous in Christ, the new heavens and the new earth are a glorious prospect. All their sadness and tears will be dissolved, and peace, joy, love, surprise, creativity and adventure would come to them.

In regard to this situation, we may get a genuine doubt, when the new heavens and the new earth eventually come. According to the views and opinions of some literary giants and elite, those who have faith In the pre-millennial return of Christ can understand that new heavens and new earth will start at the end of the Lord’s thousand year millennial reign. So those scholars who have gone through the Book of Revelation (20th chapter) suggest that St. John’s new heavens and the new earth will follow contextually after a brief discussion of the millennium. Therefore, the new heavens and the new earth must occur at the end of millennium. St. John also wanted to draw our attention to the fact that, during anti-Christ three and one half years of satanic empowerment, those living as Unsaved people and those who missed the resurrection and rapture of the church would become martyrs. They will be resurrected at the beginning of the millennium as part of the first resurrection unto life.

Then another question arises concerning those people who have rejected God's provision for sin throughout the ages in regard to their outcomes. St. John had an appropriate explanation for them. He explained confidently that they would remain in the graves and then rise at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20.5). According to the great white throne judgment, all of them will be mercilessly and eternally confined to the "lake of fire".

Apostle Peter, while writing about the "Day of The Lord" clearly linked that day of the Lord, to the new heavens and the new earth. He pointed out in an understandable way the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. And at that time the heavens shall pass away with loud noise and the elements shall melt in the fervent of heat. Then the earth and the worlds are therein shall be burnt.

The blessed hope of any church is the second coming of Christ. He will resurrect those who have died in faith throughout the ages and rapture, in one generation of believers. The day of the Lord has been defended by a noted scholar "E.E. Bruce" as the day, which "Yahweh (the Lord) will reveal Himself and will be:

- 1) The time when God arises to shake the earth terribly (Isaiah 19.21)
- 2) A time of destruction from the Almighty (Isaiah 13.6)
- 3) The time of divine wrath and fierce anger (Isaiah 13.13)
- 4) A time when God will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their inequity. (Isaiah 13.11)
- 5) The time when God's indignation and fury will be directed against the nations (Isaiah 34.1)
- 6) The time of the fire from The Lord (Joel 3.18, 23.5)
- 7) There will be darkness at that time in heavens (Isaiah 39.10. Joel 2.31)

According to widespread teachings, the new heavens and new earth which Peter warned the believers to look into, occur a thousand year after the second coming which is like a bridge too far leading to nowhere and without biblical basis. The whole argument of Peter revolves around the fact that God entered the flow of human history for judgment with Noah's flood. And God will enter into human history for the second time during the "Day of the Lord".

As indicated by Peter, the Day of The Lord occurs at the end of the millennium, with absolute requirement for new heavens and the new earth. Then the Lord's second coming during which time, He will resurrect the dead in Christ's rapture with the living believers and Satan would remain at the bottomless pit, and the anti - Christ and false prophets to the lake of fire. Then the earth will be purged.

Prophet Isaiah as God's spokesperson wrote "For behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. (Isaiah 65.17)

After the creation of new heavens and the new earth, a practical listing of millennial blessings are mentioned as follows.

- 1) Jerusalem shall be restored and blessed.
- 2) Life would be expanded.
- 3) Men would build houses and inhabit them.
- 4) They might plant vineyards and eat fruits that come out of them.
- 5) The wolf and lamb shall feed together in the fields.
- 6) Above all the lion shall eat straws like the bullocks (Oxes). All these surprising things will happen in the millennial kingdom. The new heaven and new earth that prophet Isaiah speaks about are now called renovated heavens and the earth, which commence at the beginning of the millennium but not at the end

John, while describing new heavens and new earth said "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me "Come, I will Show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Revelation 21.9). The seven angels were standing around a thousand years after pouring out their vials and the judgments were still identified as the seven angels with seven vials. Still, the case might be such if the new heavens and new earth occur after the millennium.

The new age is really a glorious one, which is a blessing to the occupants in the sight of God, who finally inhabit the new heavens and new earth. The opening of the seventh seal Indicates God's wrath that commences. The main purpose of the seal is to purge the cosmos (world), which has been defiled by sin. And during that period, the grace of God and mercy would continue. Then

there will be two more witnesses who are very powerful and who can prophesise for three and half years, till the end of the seventeenth week.

In addition to this, there will be 1,44,000 witnesses, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. They were sealed for the purpose to protecting them during the day of The Lord. And finally an angel will be there with a gospel in hand to preach to those who dwell on the earth. Among those who have surprised the earth physically till the end of Daniel's seventy weeks, will be designated by God our Lord, as "sheep" and "goats". Then they will be separated as sheep and goats by the Shepherd. After that decision, sheep will be sent to the eternal life, and goats to everlasting punishment, that is eternal damnation.

But the sheep remain there as mortals, until they are blessed through faith in Christ. Then they will be permitted to enter the new heavens and new earth. This may be done depending upon cataclysmic (catastrophic) events that are mentioned in the book of Revelation. Basing on the Information so far, we can assume there are limited number of men and women with a place in the new heavens and new earth. It is also pointed out only 7 billion people will survive the seventy weeks of Daniel.

The people judged as sheep, will enter the millennial kingdom with prolonged life and childbearing years. They are allowed to beget children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. They will have the privilege of multiplying the population as long as no disease or catastrophic events enter into their lives. We cannot presume anything at this juncture.

What happens to those who will be resurrected or raptured at the time of the second coming of Christ, and who possess glorified immortal bodies? We cannot also say whether those people who have immortal bodies can have any relationship with new heavens and new earth. St. John saw in his vision, new heavens and new earth and also the holy city - the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, fully decorated as a bride to meet her husband The Lamb (Christ). Why this New Jerusalem, is called the Holy city, because it will be the capital city of Christ's millennial reign and also the place of His throne. The New Jerusalem appears to be a chandelier city as it is coming down out of heaven and from God.

The New Jerusalem is the fulfillment of God's promise. As mentioned by John, this city is really a preexisting city, purposely built for this moment in time. Jesus comforted His disciples by saying these words. "I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again to receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also". (John 14. 2-3)

This is the same New Jerusalem that Jesus promised. He would prepare the way before going to His Father. The new place will be revealed at His second coming. This attractive and a wonderful Jerusalem city will have strong foundations, and the builder is the GodHimself; It will be well decorated like a bride to her husband. And the bride appears to be more beautiful than any other lady on her wedding day, because the decoration is perfect.

The angel told John, that the new city of Jerusalem was enormous In site, measured after construction with a reed and was twelve thousand furlongs, with equal measurement from all sides, about 1380 miles each way. If we imagine this holy city with all the floors with one-mile intervals, we may have to understand there must be 1380 levels in the New Jerusalem. And each level contains 1,904,400 sq. miles. In contrast, surface area of the whole earth including those parts under water is 196,950,000 sq. miles. With this scenario, the surface area of New Jerusalem is thirteen times more than the surface area of the earth, measuring 2,620, 072,000 sq. miles, and thus, not an ordinary city.

In this context two ideas will come to our mind. First, in that city, glorified immortals and incorruptible souls must reside. Only Second, as the city is immeasurably large in size, it can accommodate a huge multitude of people. So, who are these lucky people that will become residents or the citizens of that New Jerusalem which is supposed to be the most beautiful city to call it their sanctified home?

The New Jerusalem is a city well planned and designed by the Son of God for His bride. John said "and there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven seals full of the seven plagues and talked with me saying come hither "I will show thee the bride, the wife of The Lamb. And he carried me away in the spirit to a high and great mountain and showed me the great holy city Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven".

The New Jerusalem city has twelve gates on each side, with each gate bearing the name of one of the tribes of Israel. This shows that a great number

of the Old Testament believers who were justified by faith, like the patriarch Abraham are brought into the limelight. The angel also told John that “the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in the foundations, the names of the twelve disciples are put justified by their faith. The disciples are also called the believers of the New Testament during the new age.

The New Jerusalem will become the “home” of all believers, starting from Abraham until the second coming of Christ. This huge city will have a permanent entrance, first for the sheep who survived the seventieth week of Daniel. The second entry, is for the resurrected believers who had died In Christ through the ages, and also who are living and raptured at Christ’s second coming. They were glorified and became Immortals. They would have ultimate joy and privilege to become the citizens of the New Jerusalem.

This New Jerusalem is built with most precious ornaments for the decoration of the bride, a diamond ring, a gold wedding band and pearls studded necklace be brought. The foundations of the city garnished (decorated) with precious stones. The first stone listed here is Jasper, literally means a diamond and the whole city would be decorated with gold. In New Jerusalem God’s promise and accessibility there to all people that reside there. And John said there was no temple in that New Jerusalem, but the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the substitute for the temple. The city need not have the light of the sun or the moon because the glory of God is the light to the new holy city Jerusalem.

St. John through his dream gave a wonderful picture of the New Jerusalem built by Jesus Christ in honour of His beloved bride. As an architect, He gave the measurements of the big city Jerusalem also. In this book of Revelation the number seven is used more than 50 times. So, some scholars called that as the Book of Seven and also 5thgoseph, because St. John described not only the entire life of Jesus Christ, but also His second coming.

PROMISE OF HIS COMING

Jesus Christ fulfilled about 300 promises of the Old Testament. But the promises regarding Messiah's coming, began in Genesis itself in 3.15; following the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, and when God told that to serpent. "And I will put the enemy between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise her heel. The seed of the woman is no other than the coming Messiah; and the seed of the serpent is the coming Anti-Christ. He is also called "Caliphate" Almighty God had reminded us continuously in the entire Scripture, the coming of Israel's Messiah. Let us patiently look into all these prophecies in detail.

According to the prophecy the coming Messiah shall be the descendant of David, "A rod shall come forth out of the stem of Jesse (Jesse was the father of David) and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11.1). As mentioned in the Genealogy, Jesse begot David and King David begot king Solomon And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary; to whom Jesus was born, who is called Jesus (Matthew 1.6; 16). With His glorious birth the promise is going to be fulfilled.

As quoted in the next prophecy Jesus would be born to a virgin. Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign like, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7.14). And how this is going to be fulfilled? The arch angel Gabriel came from God to a small town in Galilee called Nazareth. He came to Virgin Mary, who was already betrothed to a man by name Joseph who was also from the house of David. The angel said unto Mary..... thou shall conceive in thy Womb, and bring forth a son and shall call his name Jesus. (Luke 1.26-27; 30-31)

The next prophecy is about the birth of Jesus. As it is said, Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (or Ephrathah). But thou Bethlehem though thou be little among thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old from everlasting" (Micah 5.2). Now, we can see the fulfillment of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judah"..... (Matthew 2.1). And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the town of Nazareth into Judaea unto the city of David which is called

Bethlehem with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should delivered. The prophecy about the Messiah was that He would be the son of God. I will declare the decree the Lord hath said unto me thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee” (psalm 2.7) who hath ascended up onto heaven or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fist? Who had bounded the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name and what is his son’s name if thou canst tell?” (Proverbs 30.4) Then how this prophecy of Messiah as the son of God was fulfilled? And Jesus when he was baptized in the river Jordan went up straight away out of the water and Lo, the heavens were opened, unto him and he saw the spirit of God, descending like a Dove and lighting upon him. And so a voice from heaven saying, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased”. (Matthew 3.16-17)

In the next prophecy it is said the Messiah would be a “deity”. For unto us a child is born unto us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder. The mighty God, The everlasting Father and The prince of peace”.(Isaiah 9.6)The fulfillment of this prophecy was, explained in the following manner “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God

And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory the glory as if the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth”, (John 1.1.1.14). Jesus said, “I and my father are one” God in his redemption plan of humanity for their sins used His begotten son, Jesus Christ as the redeemer; So, as the Lamb of God Jesus carried all the sins of the people on His shoulders and finally died on the cross and resurrected. This is also the prophecy that He shall die for the sake of the sinners. Therefore, it is said, “For those will not leave my soul in hell neither will thou suffer thine Holy one to see corruption. But God will redeem my soul from the power the grave for he shall receive me” (psalm 16.10; 49.15). Yet it pleased the Lord to make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Let us see the outcome of the prophecy and how that is fulfilled”. And an angel answered and said unto the woman fear not ye for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here for he is risen as he said come and see, the place where the Lord lay. (Matthew 28.5-6)

“For, I delivered unto you, first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures”. (1 Corinthians 15.3-4)

The next prophecy is concerning the second coming of Jesus Christ. This time He would judge the unbelievers and establish His Millennial Kingdom. So according to the prophecy, “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of olives which is before Jerusalem in the east, and the mount of olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west and there shall be a very great valleyyea, ye shall flee like as ye fled from before the earth quake in the days of uzziah King of Judah and the Lord my God shall come and all the saints with thee”. John was instructed by God in his dream to write whatever He said. Then he began to write, about those who came to attend the marriage of the Lamb of God and for the supper. John immediately fell at His feet, in his dream and saw the heavens opened and he looked at the white horse and the person who sat on it was the faithful and True. And also in His righteousness he would judge and make war. The man who was sitting on the white horse whose eyes were like the flame of fire, and there were many crowns in His head, whose cloths were dipped in blood, and His name was called “The word or God”. The armies that were in heaven followed him upon the white horse clothed in fine linen white and clean. Then a white sword came out of his mouth and he would smite the nations with that sword. Then he would rule them with a rod of iron and walk through the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And that man in his vesture and on his thigh it is written as “King of kings and Lord of Lords”. All this St.John saw in his dream.

Important prophecies to be remembered :

- 1) The Messiah would be born to a virgin Isaiah 7.14 Regarding its fulfillment – Luke 1.26-27; 30-31, 34-35.
- 2) The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem – Micah 5.2 What is said about its fulfillment –Matthew 2.1, Luke 2.4-6.
- 3) The Messiah would be God’s Son – Psalms 2.7 Reference of this fulfillment – Matthew 3.16-17, proverbs 30.4.
- 4) The Messiah would be born – Isaiah 9.6 Its fulfillment in John 1.1-14;10.30.
- 5) The Messiah would be resurrected – Psalm 16.10; 49.15.

If we study the Scripture patiently we find in it God has consistently pointed out the coming of Israel's Messiah. A Muslim who had the gift of God's power expressed his wonderful melody in the following lines.

Love was when God became man
Locked in time and space,
Without rank place,
Just a carpenter –
With some fishermen
Love was when Jesus walked in history
Lovingly He brought
A new life that's free.

According to the meaning of the above said lines, Love prompted God to be born again as a man to walk in history. As said already in the book of Revelation God is the Alpha and Omega the first and the last. Really He is the omnipotent and also who knows anything and everything in the universe because He is the maker. The timings of God for any action are always perfect and never unprepared or preplanned. So at the most appropriate time He sent His son into this world for a noble purpose. In the Bible also His perfect maintenance of time is mentioned in (Galations 4.4) as "the fullness of the time". The promise of the Messiah's coming was given about 2000 years before. In the Old Testament scripture everything was moved with the anticipation of His coming.

As said in the Scripture several events and incidents would take place indicating His second coming. They include time place way purpose and position of His sudden coming. The exact time of the coming of Messiah was prophesized to know therefore understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem (945 BC) unto Messiah the prince shall be seven weeks (49 years) and three score and two weeks 434 years and the total 483 years, the street shall be built again and the wall even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks, shall Messiah be cut off (Daniel 9.25-26). For further information regarding time and Frame of Daniels, I request the readers to consult Sir Robert Anderson's classic work internet. The correct time of the coming of the Messiah was proclaimed in the following manner...

But thou Bethlehem Ephratah though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel whose goings forth have been From of old from everlasting. (Micah 5.2)

Again how Messiah is going to come unto this world, was well described in the following lines –

“Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7.14)

Then the purpose of His coming was described and then explained the position of Messiah and the time of his coming to this world.

For unto us a child is born unto us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called wonderful. Counsellor (or) the mighty God. The everlasting father. The prince of peace” (Isaiah 9.6)

If we look into the human history there might be some top leaders who must have celebrated their birthdays magnificently because of the life they lived in the world. But there was only one man whose birth day and death day have been celebrated in the entire world even today and that is Jesus Christ or the Messiah of Israelites. Every year in the month of December millions of people all over the world remember His birth and in the month of March or April, the believers remember Him as the conqueror of death. All men and women in this world are born and they should die one day or the other. But in the case of Jesus Christ, He was born to die only. That is the uniqueness of His birth, which has various shades of meanings regarding His death. These two events in the life of Messiah are inseparable because of the uniqueness.

Millions of people would be looking forward every year, for the month of December, which has been continued for 2000 years, to commemorate the birthday of Jesus, the son of God. His birth was not a common one, there is some super specialty in it. The creator of the universe and the omniscient God knew the main purpose of the Messiah Jesus Christ. The eternal God through the prophets of Israel gave detailed prophecies concerning the promised seed who is to set upon the stage one day of human history. The genealogy of the Messiah was really wonderful. It was said that the Messiah had to come through the seed of Abraham (Genesis 12.3) through the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49.10) and through the family of David. (2 Samuel 7.12-13)

Messiah had a legal right to the throne of David (Isaiah 9.7). He must be born to a virgin, that too in Bethlehem, the birth place of David. Above all He must be a ‘deity’ (God). The Messiah possessed all these requisite qualifications by birth, and prophet Isaiah wrote in his book about 500 years before the birth

of Jesus. The old Testament is also full of accounts of satanically inspired plans or attempts to destroy the world flood line of the Messiah. Some of the attempts made by Satan to pollute the genealogy are mentioned below –

- 1) The intermarriages between the sons of God (corrupt angelic beings) to the daughters of man. (Genesis 6.2). This was an attempt tried by Satan to corrupt the human race in order to prevent the coming of the promised seed.
- 2) The proclamation of Pharaoh to kill all the male children among Jews in Egypt in order to reduce the Jewish population (Exodus 1.22).
- 3) The attempt of queen Athaliah to exterminate all the sons of the royal families (2 kings 11.1).
- 4) The Egyptian, the Assyrian, and the Babylonian captives with the accompanying dangers of the assimilation of the Jewish people.

All these crooked plans were instituted by the Satan the enemy of God. The reason for this was to keep away the promised seed from His appointed task. It seemed many a time the coming of the Messiah became impossible though He fulfilled all the requirements. But God is there. He overruled the wicked plans of humanity and also became responsible for the redemption plan to the entire humanity. God also made two promises with King David which could not be altered. God made a covenant with David, king of Israel about the throne that it would be everlasting. The second promise was his off springs would sit on that throne. The promise of God to David was unconditional as the throne was reserved to his descendants only. Finally all these promises were fulfilled with the Messiah who was called David's "greater" son. According to the Bible, David had a good number of sons, but there was only one eligible to sit on the throne. And that was Solomon. But God cursed him because he had committed many evil things and became a sinner. Thereby his descendants became disqualified for the throne of David. And Joseph, who was betrothed to Mary was the descendant of Solomon, King David had another spotless son "Nathan" from whom God loved Mary came as a descendant of Nathan; and as a result, she became responsible for the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and finally who became qualified to sit upon the throne of David.

The gospel of Matthew first chapter gave us the complete list of descendants of David. This genealogy finally ends with Joseph, the betrothed husband of Mary. (Matthew 1.16) – The fourteenth descendant of King David

in the royal lineage was King Jaconiah. Apart from this name, he was also called Jehoiachin or coniah. He ruled Judah as the nineteenth king of Davidic dynastic rulers. Among the rulers of Judah he was considered a great cursed man for his sin. And the nature of curse was in the following lines –

“Thus saith the Lord, 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 any more in Judah” (Jeremiah 22.30)

The curse imposed on Jaconiah by God did not give clear cut idea that he would never have any children. It also gave an idea that none of his sons would be qualified to sit upon the throne of David. Here we find one complicated issue. That is those who had legal right, to the throne were barred from that. Then Joseph was the eligible candidate to the throne, but he was the direct descendant of Jeconiah and in the kingly line of Solomon who was a great sinner and who worshipped heathen gods and goddesses. If Jesus would be the biological son of Joseph he too would have come under the curse and barred from sitting on the throne of Israel.

Then it became a great problem. There appeared three important conditions to authorize the Messiah –

- 1) Jesus must be in the direct line of David.
- 2) He must be the legal son of Joseph.
- 3) Yet, He could not be the physical son of Joseph. So He did not come under God's curse of the descendants of Jeconiah. As true believers, we all know that nothing is impossible to God. He can do and undo things and so he solved the problems by the miracle of the virgin birth. The genealogy of Jesus was enlightened to Joseph in the 1st chapter of Matthew. As explained in the chapter Jesus was not the biological son of Joseph we have proof from the Bible, that when Jesus was born Joseph was only betrothed to Mary and he had no sexual connection with Mary.

At the same time, we have to understand the above said statement and conclude that Jesus was not the legal son of Joseph. Even though He was not the biological son of Joseph with all the information there is still a problem. The prophets of Israel prophesied that the Messiah should be a direct descendant of David we have to study again how far this condition was to be fulfilled. The answer for the question whether Jesus was direct descendant of David or not

could be found in the Gospel of Luke. This Luke happened to meet Mary, mother of Jesus in Ephesus. He got all the first hand information about the genealogy of Mary or (the family tree) and the story of her biological son Jesus. As recorded, Mary was the direct descendant of David, but not from the lineage of Solomon, or King Jeconiah because the curse of Solomon fell upon Jeconiah then upon Joseph her husband. But she came through another son of David and his name was “Nathan” (Luke 3.23-31). So the curse of Jeconiah did not fall on Mary or her biological son Jesus Christ.

To say in brief –

- 1) Jesus was a direct descendant of Mary and she was a direct descendant of David.
- 2) In Jesus God’s promise to David (that he would have a son to sit upon his throne) is fulfilled.
- 3) Jesus was the legal son of Joseph and thereby inherited the legal right to sit on the throne of David we can also conclude that Jesus was biological son of Joseph, and as a result, He escaped the curse of Jeconiah.

All this was made possible by the miraculous birth of Jesus through a virgin the son of God Through a virgin. The real fact is the virgin birth of Jesus is not an alternative to be considered but a truth to be believed. So to say, this virgin birth is the most important point of redemptive story. He was sent by God, to die for humanity is redemption and to buy back the last creation of God. He sent His beloved son to die because of His unconditional love toward His people. Redemption could never be done, simply with the redemption stamp or with the valuable metals like gold or silver which are perishable in this material world.

Therefore, true Redemption required a Lamb, a spotless one and without any blemish. So the Lamb of God called Jesus Christ came as a spotless Lamb for the sacrifice and died for the permanent redemption of humanity and perfect salvation. So Jesus was the Lamb slain (in the mind of God) even before the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13.8) So, it is said Jesus came unto this world, for not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. Then regarding His impending death He said “For this cause I came unto this world. (John 18.37)

It is clearly said in the Bible – Jesus was born to die. Why should He die? Or under what circumstances He was forced to die? What made the son of God to suffer to the highest degree on the Roman cross and die miserably? The suitable answers are –

- 1) Jesus was born to die because God is Holy and His Holiness condemns humanity's sin.
- 2) Jesus was born to die because God is Just and so His Judgment must punish sin.
- 3) Jesus was born to die because God is truth and His truthfulness declares the soul that sinneth shall die. (Ezekiel 18.4)
- 4) Jesus was born to die because God is love and His unconditional love abhors sin, not loves the sinner.
- 5) Jesus was born to die because God has long suffering and that is needed for the repentance of humanity.
- 6) Jesus was born to die because God is good and His goodness deserves everything best for humanity God's crowning achievements.
- 7) Jesus was born to die because God is gracious and His graciousness delays to bestow upon humanity the undeserved mercy instead of deserved condemnation.
- 8) Jesus was born to die because it is for our sins otherwise we have to die in our own sin.

The place of crucifixion or the glory of Calvary must have prompted the people to understand exactly what God is like. It is a blessed place with sanctity whoever can visit that place shall find Holiness, Justice, truth, love goodness mercy and finally His long suffering. All these things will be revealed together. Jesus was destined to die on the cross to satisfy the unbending requirement of holy and just God. So His love toward humanity was like a mighty dammed river which was loosed to flow unabated to save His creation that was lost.

Therefore for the entire Christian community in the world the Christmas gift of God to His people was His son. So, as true believers of Christ, we have to remember and reflect upon one truth that is, the virgin birth of Jesus, His life without sin His abnormal suffering on the cross and final death. Truly, His bodily resurrection brought everlasting peace and harmony between God and humanity as far as possible. Actually peace and tranquility between God and His people is the most requisite thing for peace between humanity and humanity.

The outcome of this without peace between God and man, peace between human beings is impossible. Jesus was born to die. So that the glory of God, might be seen and with that the fallen humanity be given the potential and experience the redemption of God, and enjoy with Him forever. The baby boy who was born in Bethlehem was the Christ of the cross of Calvary and the Christ of Calvary was the Lord of glory. At this juncture let all of us wholeheartedly enjoy the Christmas gift of His son Jesus Christ and ever thankful to our Almighty God. So let us all with love and faith open the gift package and enjoy to our hearts content that precious and inexhaustible treasure kept in the gift package. Amen.

The meaning of the passage from the Book of prophet (Isaiah 7.14) became more controversial in understanding from the old Testament. There are two complicated points for discussion regarding the interpretation and fulfillment. Again there arose three critical objections to be answered. The controversial passage is – Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel (Isaiah 7.14) – what are the three objections let us look into them carefully. Jesus was not the child as prophesied because He was not named Immanuel.

In general Hebrew names would usually reflect the significant history or character and quality of a person to whom they were given as a gift. This was true in changing the names of Abram to Abraham and Jacob to Israel. In the same way Messiah was given the Hebrew name “Yeshua”. (which means salvation). He would “save his people from their sin” (Matthew 1.21). Likewise Messiah was Immanuel (God with us). Even though it was not his common name. Prophet Isaiah in chapter 9 called this child to be born “El zilbor”, the mighty God. This was a title reserved for the Holy one of Israel. Truly, the God of Israel would be seen, clearly with His people in the person of Immanuel as He was in the Shekinah (the dwelling or sitting of God’s presence) glory of the wilderness Tabernacle.

Finally it can be boldly said that the Hebrew Scripture did not give any suitable answer as a proof for the fulfillment of Immanuel. And this is very important to say in this connection. This name Immanuel was mentioned only three times in the Hebrew Scripture. His name is first found in Isaiah 7.14, as the birth of Immanuel was prophesied. Second time, it is said the land of Immanuel (Israel) would be invaded by the Assyrians (Isaiah 8.8). Third time, it

is said all the anti-Semitic plots of the Gentiles would be ultimately become nothing and they were to be brought down by Immanuel the one called (God with us). (Isaiah 8.10)

Then who must be the real Immanuel if he had lived during 745 BC. (It was the time of prophecy) Some people or the commentators are under the impression that Immanuel was the secondary name for Ahaz's son "Hezekiah". But this is next to an impossibility because Hezekiah was already nine years old when Ahaz began to rule Judah. (2 Kings 17.1; 18.1-2) Some others were under the impression that Immanuel was the second son of prophet Isaiah himself. His name was "Maher – shalal – hash – baz". His predict in (Isaiah 8.1 – 3). Yet he was never considered Immanuel nor identified as Immanuel in the Bible. Those critics or scholars who wanted to find out some passages in support of their argument but in vain. They could not find anything regarding the name of Immanuel in all the Hebrew Scriptures.

And also during the days of Israelites, no one was called Immanuel. This name was seen nowhere in the Hebrew Scripture. This name is the fulfillment of the amazing sign since Isaiah was not a false prophet and also only speculation remained concerning the identity of Immanuel. But it was Matthew who opened the history of the life of Jesus in this way..... "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord, by the prophet they shall call his name Immanuel". (Matthew 1.22-23)

Jesus could never be a sign to Ahaz's son because Jesus was born about 700 years later. Then the definite article "the" is used before virgin as "the virgin" which was nothing to do with the timings of the fulfillment to the prophecy. There is no doubt the prophecy is referred to a particular and definite woman and identified as a single woman for the fulfillment in future. (we might not see when it can be) the true identification of that would be a clear evidence when Immanuel is seen in flesh and blood. In this connection some of the commentators made a proposal for the double fulfillment of the prophecy of prophet Isaiah. Their belief was that Isaiah's second son "Maher – shalal – hash – baz" was a near fulfillment and the birth of Jesus after about 700 years was "far" fulfillment. But this is also not considered because –

- 1) Prophet was already married and had a son. So his wife was not a virgin. Added to that there is no indication of his second marriage.

- 2) “Maher – shalal – hash – baz” was not born to a virgin but he was conceived normally.
- 3) Maher – shalal – hash – baz was not at all identified as Immanuel.
- 4) The land never belonged to Maher – shalal – hash – baz
- 5) Maher – shalal – hash – baz never put down the Anti-Semitic plots of the Gentiles. (Isaiah 8.10)

With the above said points it is understood clearly that Maher-shalal-hash-baz was not at all Immanuel but a different personality. Instead of all these unnecessary assessment there is only one reference in the New Testament virgin of prophet Isaiah 7.14, the only correct fulfillment of Immanuel’s prophecy and that is Jesus Christ, Messiah. In spite of all these references there was a link between the prophecy of Isaiah’s son in the Book of Isaiah 8th chapter (which was fulfilled during the time of Israel and the Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah in the 7th chapter which was fulfilled (245 years later). According to the Bible, Isaiah’s son served as a pledge of Immanuel’s prophecy. So, the fulfillment of short term prophecy was a guaranty for the long term prophecy of Immanuel to be fulfilled.

The next objection was that the word virgin is said to be wrong translation of the Hebrew word “Almah”, in (Isaiah 7.14) If some people consider the Hebrew word “betulah” but not Almah for virgin, that is also not suitable for Biblical evidence. The word betulah was actually used for a young married woman according to (Joel 1.8). So the word virgin was a wrong translation of Hebrew word. Finally a woman after wedding might be referred to as betulah. (Deuteronomy 22.17) Therefore betulah word can never be implied to virginity in these conditions. Any way we conclude by saying that betulah’s name is doubtful concerning virginity but it must have been used for virgin and non-virgin young women in Scriptures.

Next the Hebrew word Almah is used for “virgin” and this Almah was never used for non-virgin. (Genesis 24.43; Exodus 2.8) Unlike the word “betulah”, Almah was used for unmarried woman (virgin). So, if any prophet used this word, he must have been supported by the Holy Spirit concerning the virgin. This is really the most precious word in the Hebrew Bible. As far as we can understand the New Testament does not make any mistake and Matthew did not invent a new theology. The Holy birth of Messiah was carefully and correctly foretold as He could be born to virgin and He would be divine presence of God with the people. Therefore, Matthew concluded his statement and made his point with force and without apology to anyone.

APOSTLES AND THEIR JOURNEY

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves” (Matthew 10.16). Jesus said these words when He was sending His disciples to different places. A Franciscan church priest Fergus Clarke Gazes spoke at the tomb of Jesus Christ in the church of the Holy sepulchre in Jerusalem. The emptiness of the tomb echoes the message of the Apostles that Jesus Christ raised from the dead.

The coming of Apostle Thomas to India caused a wonderful result. He was responsible for the spreading of Christianity as a founder. The outcome of his effort was beyond comprehension. It is said; today there are about 27 million Christians in India, who converted themselves from Hinduism. Though they knew it was a risky job, they whole heartedly accepted Christ as their saviour. But in 2008, the extremist of the nation, happened to kill at least 60 Christians and misplaced about 60,000 in Orissa state. Still the worshippers used to gather secretly in the house of the priest and continued their worship.

The influence of St. Thomas brought pilgrims from the Northern part of Spain to his greater presumed tomb in Santiago de compostila since medieval times. During the last year itself about 2,00,000 believers track to his tomb. Some pilgrims in their journey collected even stamps provided by the church authorities and also passports issued by the concerned people for the purpose of record, How far the pilgrim's walked, and other progress is marked by spiritual transfiguration. The apostles often experienced inhuman suffering for speaking some radical views about. Due to the hasty preaching James the greater was brutally beheaded by King Herod Agrippa. Then James the lesser was also likely clubbed to death. They were remembered in the Armenian Cathedral of St. James in Jerusalem. Actually it is a small shrine, which marks the purported beard of St. James the greater head.

There were some gruesome instances where in many faithful Christians happened to be mercilessly tortured by some nationalistic Hindus in India. For example, a 19 year old boy Anil kuldeep received a scar in his thigh. It was the result of eight hour torture upon him by the fanatic Hindus. The reason was the boy refused to renounce Christian faith; when some Hindu extremists attacked him in his village in 2008. Now that boy is at the make shift camp in Odisha. He wanted to continue his studies, but no money even to pay the fees.

In the southern state of Kerala, in India, and in the town of parur, there is a church. It is with the polished stone floor with wonderful brightness. That floor mirrors the a crimson pine green and gold upon gold altar piece like a reflecting floor. Arowned the altar piece, there were painted clouds hover in a blue sky. Then some small statues were kept standing in niches boodst, with the brilliant uequa (Son of God). In addition to that, on a ring near the church wall there was a woman in a blue sary and with a purple veil. It was covering her hair kneeling motionless ebonies at her sides and with raised hands. Adjacent to that there is a larger church, which was built recently. Then there is a shard of pale bone which is no bigger than a thumbnail lies in a golden reliquary.

Along with that a label was kept to identify the relic as the replica of St. Thomas. According to the traditions and authentic information the first Christian church was established by St. Thomas in Kerala state in India during 52 AD. In parur and in some other places in Kerala, erotic animals, wines over mythic figures are woven into that wonderful church in that remote place, which was actually occupied by wild animals. The surroundings of that church represent and demonstrate the rich and non-western flavor of those Christian places.

The other churches in Kerala are full of paintings of the icons like St. Thomas, the virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, and St. George. In those places, where churches were built, the Hindus also used to worship and pray to St. George with the belief that St. George would protect their children from the attack of cobra. At the church of DiamperTherapunithura there is a painted white statue of the picta – the Virgin Mary holding the dead Jesus is backed by a pink metal. There, the Sun would radiate the rectangular blades of light.

The Christians of St. Thomas of Kerala, like other Christians in different places of Asia, Africa and Latin America have made their faith very great. And also their own incorporating traditional art, architecture and natural symbolism. In this connection, a statue was installed. It was depicted in such a way where in Mary Magdalene was blanked by two elephants shading her head with a bour. Thomas otherwise known as doubting Thomas was one of the twelve disciples or also called Apostles; who were sent out after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ for the spreading of new born faith. The other apostles that followed St. Thomas were peter, Andrew, James the Greater, James the lesser, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thaddaeus, Simon and Matthias who came in the place

of former disciple and traitor Judas Iscariot. The words “apostolos” which means “Messenger”. This word is used to the disciples..... who tried to spread the message of Christ throughout the world. But Paul was not a disciple of Jesus still he claimed the title “apostle” for himself with a belief that he had seen the Lord and received the spiritual commission from God.

Mary Magdalene was also with Jesus in His later part of life. She became very powerful among the disciples and was known as apostle to Apostles because of her role in announcing the resurrection to them. Even though only two of the four Matthew and John were called the original Apostles, Mark and Luke were also considered apostle because of their writings in the New Testament called Gospels In the early stage after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ Christianity was like a seed to grow as a new religion. Because of its inception it needed a developed liturgy a correct method of worship and a name. The earliest followers also called it “the way” to follow. The truth is that this new faith was not even Judaism. But it was Apostle Peter who championed the cause of spreading and making it popular in the public. This we can see in the book of the “acts of apostles”. As readers, we can find his mass conversations, his miracle makings his healing the lame raising the dead and his calling down a supernatural death upon one couple, held back as a part of their devotion to the community.

This movement in its earliest days became very significant to attract people in a large scale because of the persecution; and at the same time, the so called Christians had some differences with neighbouring Jews. It really became a threat for the growth of Christian faith among people. In such situation, according to Bible, the first person (Christian) who became a martyr for his faith was St. Stephen.

Stephen was a Christian and one of the leaders of his church. He enraged Jewish community by suggesting that Jesus would return and destroy the Temple of Jerusalem. For that he was tried for blasphemy around the year 35 AD. His accusers dragged him out of the city and stoned him to death. But before his death, he humbly prayed to God forgive her trespassers. The young soul which would become paul later in his celebrated conversion on the road to Damascus simply observed the execution of Stephen and mending the cloaks of those who stoned him to death. In the year 44 king Herod Agrippa 1 imprisoned and beheaded James the greater. He was the first Apostle to die like that. In the year 64 a great fire in Rome destroyed about 10 of the city’s 14 quarters. Emperor

Nero was responsible for that fire in Rome, but he diverted the fact and blamed the Christians for that. It erected catastrophe on the growth of Christian movement and committed scores of believers to death in the arena of the emperor. The Roman historian Tacitus wrote, "An immense multitude was convicted not so much of the crime of firing the city as of hatred against mankind". He covered Christian's bodies with the skins of beasts and their bodies were torn to pieces by the dogs and perished. Some were nailed to the crosses and some were doomed to death with flames and burnt to serve as a night illumination when the day light had gone.

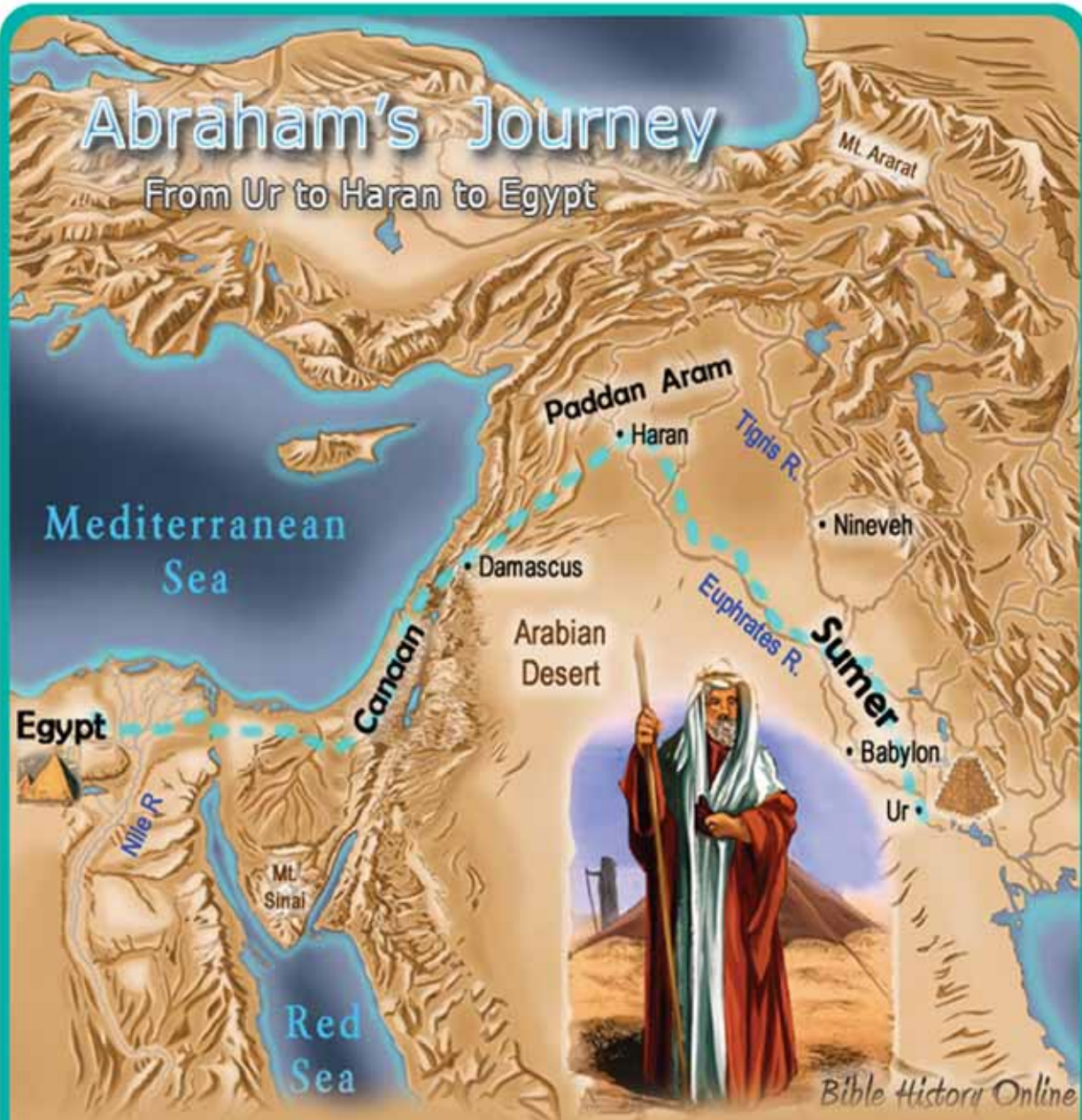
Then in the year 110 Ignatius the Bishop of Antioch was arrested by the Romans under Trajan. After that, he was shipped to Rome and condemned to death. The emperor killed Christians at the public games even by beasts. Bloody events like this continued in their region for two centuries more Biblical history clearly said the 11 apostles out of twelve were martyred. Peter, Andrew and Philip were crucified. James and Thaddaeus fell to the sword. James the lesser was beaten to death while he was sincerely praying for his attackers. Bartholomew was flayed alive and then crucified Thomas and Matthew were speared and died Metheias was stoned to death. Simon was either crucified or sawed into two halves. Among all the disciples, the last survival was John who seemed to have died peacefully probably in Ephesus around the year 100.

In the early days, Columba Star a benediction monk and historian at St. John's Abbi in Minnesota said, the organizational structure in the great institution of church signified for Roman authorities to-day by the Vatican and its complex hierarchy. There was an apostolic band of followers. There were missionary efforts in major centres first in Jerusalem, then in Antioch and then in Rome. The Apostles were like movements cutting edges only with the aim of spreading the message of Jesus along vast trade network of the ancient world and leaving small Christian communities in their own paths for their development and to study the lives of the Apostles. This was really a big bang moment for Christianity with the Apostles blasting out of Jerusalem and scattering across the known world. St. Thomas went toward East, which is called at present as Syria and Iran.

Some historians gave authentic proof that Apostle Thomas had gone to Southern India also. He travelled a long distance even more than Apostle Paul. Of all the disciples Thomas represented most profoundly the missionary Zeal that is associated with the rise of Christianity. The readers must notice the untiring

Abraham's Journey

From Ur to Haran to Egypt



ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY

desire of Apostle Thomas to travel to the ends of the known world to preach a new creed. The Evangelist Mark also contributed his might for the spreading of the message of Jesus to Egypt and found the captive faith. But for Catholics, Mark represented the saint most emphatically as political symbol. The Catholics also made Mark more powerfully linked with the identity of Venice. Even though, he was a figure from ancient people, he retained a strong grip on the consciousness of modern day Venetians than George Washington or Abraham Lincoln in America.

If we take it for granted that St. Thomas was an iconic missionary and Mark as a political cornerstone, then Mary Magdalene was described as a mystical saint who was closely associated with grace and divine intercession. Other saints like Theorise of Lerelex and Teresa of Avila. These three saints play very important role in Roman Catholicism. Among these three, Mary Magdalene created more controversy. She was once maligned as reformed courtesan, but today she was venerated by millions of people all over the world. She was the most important person in the inner circle of Jesus Christ. Again the place of her death became another controversy. Some scholars were under the impression that she died in Ephesus. Others believed she travelled all the way from the Middle East, to Southern France; If her death is established with the scientific proof. She came to the hills of “province” and must have died there as Thomas died in India.

St. Thomas was called a great missionary by many scholars and historians. He entered the farm land, coast of Kerala, eraemgamore. It is said, he had established seven churches in Kerala, and after twenty years of his hectic missionary work at various places. He was martyred at a place called Mylapore. Now it became a neighbourhood to Chennai. At Palayure church in Zuvazhore St. Thomas raised the first cross in India and there he performed one of his miracles. One day, he encountered a group of Brahmans. They were throwing waters into the air as part of their ritual. Then he asked them why the water was falling to earth, back if it pleased the deity such offering.

Then Thomas flung a great spring into the air and the droplets hung there in the form of glistening blossoms. The result of that wonderful miracle was that most of the onlookers at that spot embraced Christianity and others fled from that place. In India people thought about Thomas as a bold and active

missionary. In this context, ColomboStewart, said “The classic portrayal of St. Thomas as a doubting Thomas, because he doubted about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is also true that Thomas wanted direct confrontation against Jesus for the conformation of His resurrection.

This point might give an idea that Thomas must have been a practical minded man. So, he said in a strange way to put his fingers into the wounds of Jesus. So that he would believe. His principle was “seeing is believing”. This incident prompted him to remain more in God’s service. The movement of Thomas and his disciples proved a two edged sword in the history of Christian through some theologians are very smart to point out his doubt only natural which would echo the uncertainty. It is also called Scepticism felt by millions of people. The challenge made by Thomas regarding the wounds of Christ. His faith became stronger after he looked into the wounds by himself. Another point in this connection is that no other Apostle shared the crises of doubt of Thomas about the wounds of Jesus. So, in the Gospel of John 20.29 Jesus Himself chastises Thomas saying. “Thomas because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” St. Thomas inspite of his scepticism stood as the direct link between his converts in Kerala, and the following Christian story in the shores of Mediterranean, across the known world of the first century. The later Christian groups in Asia were not like converted Christians by missionaries whereas the Christians of Thomas believed. Their church was founded by one of the followers of Jesus Christ and that was the central point for their spiritual identity. Suvrat said, “There are an apostolic churches and that is the ultimate seal of approval for a Christian group.

THE SOUL OF VENICE:

The Evangelist Mark indelibly associated with pride in the place. There is no other historical figure, who is more clearly linked with prince. His Basilica is the center of its ancient faith. Marks symbol is the winged lion and its paw. This symbol is upon the open Gospel. For the Venetians of the ninth century and after viva San Marco was the battlery and legends of St. Mark intertwined with the earliest roots of the Venetians Republic. Even then, as the tradition reveals us that Mark died a Martyr in Alexandria Egypt. Then how could he secure such an importance in the modern city state?

During the ninth century Italy required an efficient single political leader. He must be a young and most powerful man Himself not be a weak person like St. Theodore but a strong and powerful person like Titan among saints was required. In such expectations, a great unrivalled saint was born in medieval history. In 828 probably on the orders of the doge two Venitian merchants named Bono do Mala – Mocco and Rustio da Torcula, stole the remains of St. Mark from his tomb in Alexandria or some said they were taken from the priests. The conspirators after returning to their ship put their remains of St. Mark in a basket and covered that with pork in order to discourage official involvement.

After they reached Muslim port, the officials stopped their ship for interrogation and then pierced into the basket. The thieves recoiled in distress crying and said it was “Kanzar, Kanzar” which means “pig” in Arabic language. Then the officials commanded the Venitians to hurry along. According to some reliable information a tempest blew up off the Greek coast on their Voyage home. So the storm totally disturbed the relics of St. Mark, except the vessel. However, the legend said the theft of Mark’s relics gave the fledging republic a spiritual comfort matched in all of Latin Christendom.

This extraordinary cup brought forth brilliant success to Venitian super power. From the earliest days of the Republic St. Mark was the flag of Venice, Glerardo Oralli was a medievalist at the University of Venice and a popular expert on St. Mark. He said there was no other saint as far as he knew, who was more important than St. Mark politically wherever Venice left her imprint, people would find Mark’s lion – in Greece Crete, Cyprus, Alexandria etc.,. On the old Venetian gold coin the ducate, St. Mark offered the flag of Venice to the doge.

The believers and readers wished to know what really happened to the relics of St. Mark some were under the impression that those relics were put in other tombs in Sarcophagus in St. Mark’s Basilica in Venice. It is said, the Coptic church in Alexandria claimed the skull of the saint. For scientists and non-believers, believers and for the forensic the fingers of Thomas as the fingers of some saint has become a problem. The Catholic church called some pathologists for the purpose of examining the dates, and then only, they wanted to preserve the relics in churches.

Ezio Fulchere was a devoted Catholic and a well travelled pathologist, who sincerely worked on church relics for decades. He studied and preserved the remains of many saints. He was a close friend of St. Frances also. Fulchere said that whenever a relic was found, that was to be clearly estimated not authentic. The congregation might accept it without test, but the church would not venerate false relics like St. Mark which have not yet been tested. Most of the scholars, scientists and clergy could not call themselves successful. Even catholic churches were not successful in testing the relics of St. Mark.

But one thing is clear, The catholic church gained importance by testing the bones of the Saint. At the same time, majority of the scientists were not interested to spare their precious time for testing the Holy relics. Giorgio Filippi was an archeologist employed by the Vatican authorities. He said, he had vehemently opposed the receipt of analysis and dating of paul's relics in Rome, and those results happened to be announced by the pope in 2009. According to him, any research work done out of curiosity would not give correct judgment. Georgeo Filippi also said that any research work on the relics of St. Mark was more complicated and advised the readers either to pray to virgin Mary or to Jesus Christ instead of St. Mark relics. Except in Basilica but on his name, the believers could not find a place to light their candle in memory of St. Mark.

He was the embodiment of many things as a saint. But one cannot go to St. Mark particularly with a candle. In catholic and orthodox churches, believers often light their candles to follow prayers to the saints mourning for them before their favorite icons or statues St. Mark described as part of Venetian identity Ortalli continued saying "you have two feet and bones like St. Mark. The old people also, when they were in drunken stage during late night they used to sing some song about St. Mark Venice city was constructed with a soul and the center of it was St. Mark. When the Venetian Republic was dissolved finally under Nepolean the cry of people the mourners in the start was not "Venice la liberta or viva la Republica", but viva san Marco which means "Venice without Mark".

There lies in the face of a broad forested massif, overlooking a high plain is called East of Aixen province and the cave of Sainte Baume. According to Roman Catholic tradition, Mary Magdalene spent her last 30 years in that place. From the parking lot, a steep hike through the forest would bring any visitor to the cave and a small adjoining monstry was to be found. Generally

during the month of June especially in the morning the cave used to be cooler than outside. In the light of the candle, the stone altar would shine in the center of the grotto and some statues of Mary Magdalene were to be seen irregularly in the cave. In addition to that, two relics of the saint, a lock of hair and the presumed end of a tibia which became dark due to age, lay in a gilded reliquary.

Professor Candida Moss was a specialist in the New Testament and Christian origins of the University of Notre Dame. She found more interest in the early Martyrs. She was enquired about her impression regarding the psychology of relics why people used to look at them with a grieving mind. She replied, "When my mother cried, people offered her children a piece of hair to keep it as a remembrance to keep it and we all did so. I think anyone who has ever mourned would understand why you meditate on things associated with someone you love. We can have this kind of examples in small Christian communities. The appeal was of a person in your mind with whom you could have direct contact after his or her death.

On one occasion Candida Moss happened to be in the cave of Sainte Baume and she was joined by a handful of pilgrims and a large group of cheerful French Middle School children cross against cold. Then a modern Shaman was down to Sainte Baume. He came over there not because of Catholic influence, but for its reputation among Shamans and New Age practitioners. According to local traditions, the cave had served as a shrine long ago for pagans for fertility rites and it must have been remained as a pilgrimage site for those who were seeking feminine spirituality. There is a kind of free everywhere in that forest, but not just in the cave. Practically speaking it has nothing to do with the presentation of Mary Magdalene in the Gospel. The cave has been taken care off by the Dominican order since 1295. The monastery is made at a great height upon a cliff facing the forest and the palm below could be seen for miles together during the break in the fog.

Michel Levanon another scholar said about Mary Magdalene that she was the most important person in the New Testament. Yet some Bible readers speak very little about her, knowing the fact how much importance Christ gave her among the disciples. She was very intelligent and that was listed by many. Though she was a sinner, she was chosen by Christ as the first witness of his resurrection. He did not choose anyone of the Apostles or Virgin Mary being His own mother but He chose Mary Magdalene what must be the reason. Perhaps, she must be

first one who asked for His forgiveness and perhaps it was not the time for Peter even though he became more popular as a miracle maker and founder of Catholic Church. So, Jesus said, it was the time of Mary Magdalene.

Mary Magdalene's witnessing about the rising of Jesus was noteworthy. She was the first woman to see with her naked eyes. It was really a great movement in the New Testament. This wonderful event was debated and discussed by various scholars for centuries. In the Gospel of John it is clearly said that three days after Christ's burial Mary Magdalene went first to the sepulchre, though it was still dark. To her surprise she found the door of the tomb was moved. She at once ran to disciples. Some of them came, found the tomb empty, and they again returned home miserably. But Mary Magdalene remained there alone weeping. She stayed at the foot of the cross, and looked at the tomb again. Surprisingly she saw two angels standing at the place where the body of Jesus was rested.

The cave and other things crowned have a particular female representative in origin and shape. This led some people to believe that they were fertility cult sites in prehistoric times. These fertility activities were in progress before the arrival of Mary Magdalene. The state had protected the forest, which became rich with biological diversity and it remained sacred for a long time. Women used to go to that place even today for millennia to pray for children and then rub their abdomens to the statue of Mary Magdalene while praying. But this physical activity was not encouraged by the churches still it could not be prevented. It was written on the walls of the cave some notes and plaques of gratitude in many languages. "Thank you Mary Magdalene for healing my daughter" in French.

The Dominicans built a hostel at the Massif Plains and received all kinds of people. The priest used to tell the visitors that Mary Magdalene was the saint, of love a courageous woman, who stayed boldly at the crucifixion, when most of the others including His disciples ran for their lives. She stayed at the foot of the cross even ready to die for Christ. So, to say she remained as a model for righteous life.

MARY MAGDALENE

According to the Gospel of Luke (8.2-3) Mary Magdalene seemed to have appeared for the first time in the chronology of Jesus Christ. She walked all the way from her native village Magdala to Capernaum, Which was about 10 miles. At that time, she possessed 7 demons, and walked on the rough road to meet Jesus. She wished to see Him, when He became a noted person in and around Galilee as a rabbi (teacher). By virtue of His merciful heart, He extended His arms to the people, who considered themselves “sinners”, and who were battling with demons and other diseases. Mary Magdalene must have met Jesus prior to His visit to Capernaum. Jesus also paid a visit to Magdala before 25 CE. But there is no authentic information about His visit to that place.

Mary Magdalene was not introduced by Luke as a wealthy woman; while giving her bio-data. As per the historical background, she was a rich woman and had regular contact with rich business magnets. She was even invited by the emperor of Rome, Tiberious Caesar to his royal palace; after the death of Jesus Christ. On that occasion, she seized the opportunity and preached the gathering about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But the emperor was not happy at the speech of Mary, and said God would no more raise than changing the egg in Mary’s hand from white into red. Immediately the egg turned into red as spoken by the emperor. This wonderful incident would certainly remain forever in the mind of some orthodox Christian believers, and many on the Easter day.

Some modern scholars have been trying to give the full details of Mary Magdalene with a business woman by name Joanna. According to Luke’s Gospel, Joanna was married into the rich house of Herod Anti pass the ruler of Galilee. Some modern scholars are of the opinion that Mary had good friendship with Joanna regarding business activities. Mary exploited Joanna’s contracts and spent her own money for dinners and used Jesus for her talk. Luke did not say anything regarding her sharing of status with Joanna; but he said both were women and good friends. Anyway, Joanna was married to a member of aristocratic family. Mary was not as rich as Joanna, but instead of riches she had demons. Historians had different opinions about the riches of Mary or whether she gave all her property to Jesus for the distribution among the poor.

Luke did not say how old Mary must have been when she met Jesus for the first time with demons. But she was undoubtedly a few years older than Him. And also nothing was said about her marriage or her family back-ground. She must have crossed that age already, because women in those days were betrothed at the age of 12 years, and married at 13 years. As she possessed seven demons she was considered “unclean” and not pure enough to beget children. The Jews in Galilee defended themselves regarding their purity, by following the Law of Moses; which was written in Hebrew language and passed on in oral form in Aramaic language. As a matter of fact the Law of Moses contained many things including the family life of Jews. The Jewish people used to think of their purity as their identification and more precious than anything on earth.

Jesus and His followers often called demons as “unclean spirits” that inhabited Mary. Those demons were treated as contagious as they moved from place to place and from person to person. In the Hellenistic world, an invisible contagion of this trend was called daemon Judaism. This time was also referred to the same force distinguishing between good spirits (such as of angels, and the Holy Spirit that has God breathed over the world) and the bad spirits that Jesus called those spiritual influences as “unclean or evil spirits”. The word “demon” has been used in this sense/ within both Judaism and Christianity. In the ancient world, whether Jews or non-Jews agreed that demoniac would be harmful. They would be invading people, animals and other objects to inhabit and possess them. In Anti-quity women without families, were considered vulnerable. The gospels also identified woman would remain in her father’s house hardly for a year or so and after the settlement of marriage, She must go to her in laws house. Then taking somebody’s wife was punishable as per the Torah (levities 20.10). Then maintaining relationship with a married woman was considered adultery. And seducing a virgin would be punishable very lightly and sometimes only by fine. All these principles were followed by Israelites to maintain the purity of their women; so that the husbands would know that they married virgins. Modern scholars portrayed Mary Magdalene, as a prostitute, when she met Jesus Christ, but encouraging any woman to become a prostitute was prohibited even though she was in troubles financially. And also the punishment for encouraging any woman for prostitution was not said anywhere.

It is amazing to note that prostitution was rampant during some period in Israel. It is said women of 12 or 13 years age, were imported from different countries for that purpose. It became their business for some people at that time. There were two answerable questions in this connection. The questions were concerned to the character of Mary Magdalene, whether she became a prostitute before she met Jesus Christ, whether she was raped or exploited in her journey from Magdala. Something is clear, that is in her time victims of "sin" were stamped as "sinners". Luke's reference to Mary's seven demons gave scope for western people to depict her as a prostitute. In spite of contradictory statements of various people, in connection with her social status Mary became very popular as patron saint of flagellants in the fourteenth century and devotion to her and to the practice of self-inflicted pain, which spread. In one of the stories of her life, she clawed at her skin until she was bleeding. She beat her breast with stones and tore out her hair. She did all those things as an act of penance for her self-indulgence.

In 1375 an Italian fraternity of flagellants carried a banner which depicted a giant enthroned Mary Magdalene. As per the painted picture, her head was turned towards heaven, and angels were around her, At her feet, there were four headed figures, kneeling, where robes left a gap at the back for ritual scouring, when the Medieval people procured that wonderful image, nobody knew what happened to that. The woman whom the flagellants venerated was a combination of two different women of Mary's one was Mary Magdalene and the other was Mary of Egypt, a classic figure of Christian folklore. She was a whore, who turned as celiac. The Mary of Egypt gave up her practice of prostitution for the sake of Christ during fourth century and then lived in a cave till the end of her life.

According to the prolonged story which became more popular, in thirteenth century and appeared on "The Golden Legend" of "Jacobins de or a gine". Mary travelled to France after fourteen years of the resurrection of Jesus. She spent her life there in founding churches, and removing the idols. In the legend Mary was confused with completely different in the Gospels. Mary often depicted as nude in the crazy rocks of la, Sainte- Baum and some parts of her body were covered with her long and lustrous hair. Mary met Jesus when He moved from Nazareth to Capernaum due to some problems. His prediction of a new age completely

caused a transformation in the world. People themselves felt, they were transformed by many of His parables, and understood what they should do for achieving divine kingdom. Mary joined with Jesus and took part in His meetings. She also participated in the festive dinners at home and around Capernaum, so the name of Mary reverberated with devotion, for two millennia. Thousands of pilgrims and tourists thronged to the Vezelay hill top and the church of Vezelay in Burgundy and saint Maximin in the province.

The huge building at saint Maximin in the south of France has grand appearance and more recent. This thirteenth century Gothic complex was comprised of both Basilica and the cloister. It was wonderfully designed and Vezelay appeared far interior to that Gothic complex. The Dominican friars of saint Maximin said that the bones they had unearthed in their ancient cemetery were true relics of Mary Magdalene. The Dominican friars used to go on towns in pilgrimages even today to focus a complete glass enclosed skull of Mary Magdalene. During middle ages, Vezelay and Saint Maximin became prominent. There was rapid progress in the pilgrimage every year. They even claimed Mary's earthly remains, and worshipped her. They claimed the holy relics of flesh, transformed by Jesus. He said to Mary "Do not touch me" (John 20.17) legends added to that Jesus touched her forehead to ward her off. The solemn ceremony of Mary was attended by Bishops, Arch-bishops, Priests, Popes, Civil authorities, Kings, Peagentes etc. They took a procession in her honour Vezelay and Saint maximum and continued this parade or gathering as a traditionnrl every year on July 22 , people of high level collected themselves in Basilica churches and display the relics with the purpose of encouraging people to go on pilgrimage to her sacred places.

Mary Magdalene became part of the inner circle of Jesus. She was accepted as His disciple and showed more interest to learn His wisdom. Men and women became His disciples in Capernaum between the years 24 and 27 C.E. By sending away demons and by preaching about the advantages of God's kingdom Jesus became very popular in a very short time. He protested against Herod Anti-pass in connection with the cruel murder of John the Baptist and also the "Forces of Rome". Herod Anti-pass ruled Galilee and Persia under Roman authority. So, with the power the emperor ordered for the arrest of Jesus and His execution. Therefore Galilee became a place of mortal danger to Jesus.

Magdalene was the nick name of Mary used by the disciples the inner circle of Jesus. He gave such nick names to some of His disciples, whom He liked more. For example Simon peter was a fisherman and Jesus called him “Rock” (“kepha” in Aramaic and “Petras” in Greek). Jesus called him with that name because he was sluggish in understanding whatever was said by Him on certain occasions. That is to say he must have been most dull headed. He called James and John “Boa merges” which means sons of thunder. They were considered as noisy pair among the disciples.

The designation Magdalene separates Mary from other Mary’s, who were actually associated with Jesus. Many women were named “Miriam” which was translated into English as Mary, was closed to Jesus as His own mother Mary; mother of His two disciples James and Josses, sister of Prophet Moses (Miriam,) Mary etc. The people of Galilee were very fond of that name and used to give it to their daughters when they were born. So the name Mary Magdalene was most important for Jesus and His disciples. In the same way the people of Galilee felt proud in putting that name Mary to their daughters. This name Mary was derived from “Migdal” of low stone tower used to keep fish. The Galilean sprat was one of the favourite foods to Jesus. He liked dry fish also. It is a fact that fish became a symbol of Christians during the second century.

Luke said in his Gospel 8.2 that Jesus exorcised seven demons from Mary Magdalene. This event became more prominent in the Middle Ages They thought that she must have been afflicted by “seven deadly sins”. It is believed, when Mary met Jesus first time, she was rich enough and owned the towns of “Magdala” and “Bethany” near Jerusalem. But her wealth, beauty and youth made her imbrace worldly temptations and finally led to her downfall. She lost all her property, and forced to live the life of a common prostitute for her living. Her moral degradation caused to the teachers of the Middle Ages, to fear more about women regarding their character.

In ancient Hebrew, Babylonian and Persian numerology, this number seven played pivotal role and also from the beginning of creation, Number seven is the symbolic of totality and fullness. The Catholicism also conceived of seven cardinal virtues to balance the seven deadly sins. Jesus believed in the vital force of God’s spirit than the unclean spirits that would disturb humanity. Rabbi Jesus spoke as an exorcist, as if He had regular practice regarding demons. He

knew the unclean spirits once they were out of one person, would try to enter another. The teaching of Jesus involved with installation of Devine spirit; in the place of demons or where the demons were. Mary herself must have felt, how desperate she was with demons once, and she got great relief after Jesus sent out the demons from her body through His miracle.

She understood Jesus correctly with her own intelligence and insight' she followed Him and had long treatment for successful completion. Mary was finally cured of her demons and stood as a person at victory over evil. She sometimes appeared as the mirror image of Jesus Christ. "The Golden Legend" which is mentioned previously said that Jesus embraced Mary all His life, which gave the impression that she became His intimate friend, a constant companion and source of help in this life journey. A spokes man, by name Petrarch called her the sweet friend of God. "Jesus was the embodiment of Devine spirit that dissolved unclean spirits. Since the time of the book of proverbs that is, the sixth century B.C.E the spirit had a prominent place in the theology of Israelites as Yahweh's female partner. The face of the spirit that rushed out of the beginning of the cosmos and filled the whole universe with feminine both in the nouns and genders. In Hebrew it is called "ruach". This Devine feminine was closely identified with wisdom and eternal consort of Yahweh. Yahweh possessed me in the beginning of his way.

Before the works of his old pleasuring the experience of the earth and my delight was with the sons of man". (Proverbs 8.23 - 31)

This intimacy between wisdom and Yahweh was so strong and enjoyable, that could be described only in erotic terms. Jesus said that He had spoken on behalf wisdom (Sophia in the Greek text of Luke). For one year or so Jesus exorcised and Mary could know the technique of it better than all disciples. As a result she became one of the key persons, who could deal with the unclean spirits. She said "If I throw out demons by God's spirit then the kingdom of God has arrived upon us". Because of the true faith of Mary, she had enjoyed the privilege of eternity of the kingdom of God. She emerged as generation after the death of Jesus Christ, in the major centres of Christian population.

The Christians were involved in a complex and potentially dangerous position in the Greek-Roman world. And during the first century the worship

of Jesus was not much encouraging. And Christianity was treated as a strange form of Judaism. Then to make this religion more popular Peter took the responsibility in encouraging more people in the public. He brought many for baptism and conversion. Among all the disciples it seemed Peter topped the list in that matter. It was proved he had profound privilege in the formation of the Gospel.

If we apply the logic to the contribution of Mary Magdalene, she emerged as the source of stream that bears the oral signature. She was the main source, for the collection of many incidents connected to exorcism of Jesus. Mary simply by following Jesus, evidenced the purifying presence of spirit for good experience. With all that experience, she was able to give detailed exorcism stories. Whenever, we read the Bible, we are suggested to read those stories from the Gospel and learn how to tackle the unclean spirits (Mark 1.21-28; 5.1-17; 9.4-20) by identifying them, confronting them with Divine spirit, and proclaiming their utter defeat. The outcome is that it would reflect the progressive development of the craft of Jesus Christ that dealt with the increasing different cases of possessions.

The first story in the Magdalene source came from the beginning of Jesus' time in Capernaum after 24 C.E (Mark 21.28). The second story would reflect the period started with His flight from Herod Antipas in 27 C.E (Mark 5.1-17). The time of the third story was after the transfiguration of Jesus in 30 C.E (Mark 9.14-29) once we locate these three stories of exorcism can be found easily as tributaries of the main stories. Whenever Jesus attacked the demons they used to speak with Him, and He understood their language; but the members of the synagogue could see only the movements of the demons, and not what they talked. The demons identify themselves as the most unclean demons of the spirit. In their own fascination they would say we have nothing for you Nazarene "Jesus! Have you come to destroy us? We know who you are-the Holy One of God" Mary Magdalene described in her source the matter of unclean spirits. The demon "cried out" (Mark 1.23). Jesus cried out (shouted back at the demon in a rough language of the street shut up and out from him" (1.25). The obedience of the demon came under protest, the person who was with demon until then got healed. And the demon went from him with grumbling and screaming. Jesus Christ appeared more clearly in the second of demons as mentioned by Mary. This story occurred in Decapolis just on the other side of the Sea of

Galilee from Magdalena. At that place, Jesus had confrontation with a good member of demons. Jesus asked then their names, but they simply answered “legion”. They took shelter in a man, who inhabited a cemetery.

The word “legion” is used in connection with military soldiers. This word was more commonly used by the roman rulers. A legion means, about six thousand soldiers were considered one legion. So the man who was living in the cemetery possessed thousands of demons, we can imagine how much suffering he has faced in his life. This is also the same as the first one, which was simple, but with more vigour and abrupt noise. The regular habit of the man, who possessed thousands of demons, was to wound himself in the woozing of blood’Jesus addressed in all His exorcism and the possessed victim embodied everything unholy and his name was legion. Magdalene narrated the story of legion with sympathetic out took because she had her own pathetic story about the demons and how much she suffered. So, the story of that unfortunate man who possessed legion of demons was the replica of Mary herself. A legion as already explained consisted of six thousand soldiers in the military and some auxiliary troops would be also co-opted by the legion. Even though, the seven demons of Mary were no way equal to the legion, she had her own suffering experience through the demons. She knew the real depth of the cosmic antagonism involved in the exorcism of Jesus Christ.

Mary explained why the demons shouted at Jesus and Jesus also shouted at them even with bigger voice. The third story of exorcism of Jesus came from the source of Mary at the time of His transfiguration. He was transformed in Devine glory and talking with Elijah and Moses (Mark 9.2-8) and appeared to Peter, James and John. So, the story of Mary Magdalene source expressed the vehement insistence of Jesus on the power of spirit in contrast to the tentative Quality of the efforts of His disciples, who have been unable to deal with the demons. Then Jesus explained to His disciples “This sort can go out by nothing except by prayer”. (Mark 9.29)

Scholars and historians not yet examined the influence of Mary Magdalene, on the Gospels as they did in the case of peter, Paul, James and Barnabas. The history of Mary through her source, we can understand not only about her thoroughly, but also deeply charismatic and prophetic information of Christianity. Mary perfectly knew that the most fearsome weapon the demons used to resist

the exorcism of Jesus was their unique knowledge His identity. The first exorcism in Mark clearly identified Jesus as “the holy man of God”. In the same manner, any demon was identified as unclean spirit in any Gospel. According to the analysis of Jesus, uncleanness resides within a human being rather than in inferior objects. The unclean spirit in synagogue was a source of inequity and designated Jesus as source of piety “the holy one of God”. So, the very presence of Jesus with His purity was a threat to the demons and demonic world on the whole; the opening demonic scream, “we have nothing for you” is echoed in the pathetic story of man with a legion of demons.

The role of Mary in the development of the Gospels was passed over. It is quite clear that she was the main person responsible for our understanding of the legacy of Jesus. It was the wisdom and hard work, through which Mary’s experience made her feel proud of herself to bear the nick name “the Magdalene”. By virtue of her good activities and intelligent dealing of affairs about Jesus, She emerged as the most influenced woman in the movement of Rabbi Jesus. In 25 C.E, Jesus was forced to flee from Capernaum with the threat of death from Herod Anti-pass. He started His wanderings first in the Gentile region of Galilee and later in the western region. During that time Mary also travelled with Him. So, Jesus with Mary and other disciples, lived in towns and villages around Galilee, by healing the sick, as all the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit.

They cast away demons, “They taught people about the kingdom of God; and meditated on the presence of God’s spirit: Jesus believed that true sacrifice would bring peace, to both for the end oppression and the opening of the temple of humanity; by which the Jews and Gentiles would feel happy. Mary was with Jesus when they came to Jerusalem to attend a feast as it was the time of the feast of “sukkot” or Tabernacle. Through her wisdom and experience, Mary became well versed in exorcism. Jesus, Mary and the disciples practiced anointing, which was associated with exorcism, and healing of the diseased.

Olive oil was universally accepted antiquity and of valuable commodity throughout the Mediterranean basin. The soap was used for washing clothes one had to buy this olive oil for cleaning and dressing the skin, for dressing the wounds, for applying to the head and for cooking. So to say this oil is used for multipurpose, in olden days, apart from using it for anointing, and in the Temple menorah. The king from Davidic dynasty was anointed with that oil in a special

function in order to designate him as the sole monarch of Israel kingdom. They used to appoint women also for anointing people in those days.

Luke said that Mary Magdalene and some other woman served or ministered to Jesus and His disciples (Luke 8.3). Peter also quoted the book of Acts , which has similar identification as the one whom God anointed with Holy Spirit and power that proceeded to do good and heal those who were oppressed by the devil because God was with him always. Mary Magdalene and her companions took up this programme and other activities which were done by a popular apostle. It is said; Mary played a crucial role among the disciples of Jesus. Legends, developed and at the time of the New Testament they have produced her as a prostitute, but there is no official evidence of such allegations.

But one thing is certain. She called herself a “sinful” woman without explanation. To explain it further there are many sins committed by people who have nothing to do with sex. For example Peter called himself a “sinful” once a Pharisee was offended by the words of Christ, when he said that if someone touched a woman, it might appear sinful but he would be forgiven. And those who consciously accept divine forgiveness are alive to the bounty comes from God alone and are willing to extend their power of forgiving others with that forgiving spirit one can perform generous and spontaneous acts like hairdressers.

Mary Magdalene’s whole hearted embracing of Jesus was itself an extension of divine compassion. As a proof, she had taken up and purified by the perfect love of Almighty God. After printing of the New Testament, some countries and Christian teachers like Pope Gregory the Great identified that woman as Mary Magdalene and stamped her as the woman of no reputation. Mary “who had been a sinner in the city” (Luke 7.37) loved truth and so washed away, the stains of her wickedness and immorality with her tears. This had fulfilled the voice of the Truth who said “Her many sins had been forgiven because she loved much”. She had abandoned her wicked ways the stains of her heart and body with her tears and touched feet of the redeemer.

The identification of Mary Magdalene as a prostitute and even preaching of the sermons by preachers in certain places was really unfortunate. At the same time, the anointing of Jesus by her in His last days made other disciples angry. But Jesus explained to the disciples the importance of what she had done for



MARY-MAGDALENE

Him. Generally, anointing the dead person was a traditional part of Judaism. He said that Mary by anointing Him connected what is recollected in memory of her was the essential part of Jesus complete Gospel. So, the outcome of the Gospel is that suffering would become the medicine of divine presence.

Jesus asked His disciples that they had to learn something from Mary which was not surprising because He Himself learned that in Bathany. When He crossed back the Sea of Galilee, from Decapolis, a woman came up behind Him and touched His garments; so that a flow of blood that made her unclean was cured (Mark 5.25-34). The woman, who suffered for twelve years, from the issue of blood, happened to touch Jesus. Then He enquired who that touched Him. He finally told her, "Daughter your faith had saved you" depart in peace and be healthy from your plague.

This story too must have come from the sources of Magdalene. Undoubtedly, she was speaking about a woman, who seemed to have lived close to Magdalene and knew the story of blood flow. Indeed the touching of the garments of Jesus by that woman, exemplified Mary's own experience Jesus used His own spit on certain occasions, to heal the affected parts. The Talmud of Jerusalem also speaks much about the anointing of the diseased for the purpose of healing. Women were typical practitioners of this for healing. Mary brought the wisdom of faithful touching into the teaching of primitive church. By anointing Jesus prior to His burial, Mary prepared and prefigured His death and the suffering He was going to experience.

Anointing was the principal method during the time of Jesus conveying spirit and removing inequity. Jesus confirmed the practice of touching as a sign of faith and He praised the active contact, which was initiated by Mary Magdalene and the other woman of the issue of blood. The transfiguration of Jesus at the Tomb was witnessed by three women, led by Mary. They saw a vision and voice of the angel talking something. They became spellbound at the situation before the grave. They went to anoint Him, with spices and looking for somebody, to open the stone door of the Tomb. But they found a man in white robes, who told them that Jesus was raised from the dead and He was not there. Mary was the first woman to find Jesus and wished to anoint the corpse of Him with the help of Mary of James and Salome.

The actions and responses of Mary were difficult to understand, because she realized that God raised Jesus from His death. It was customary and also commandment of the Torah to the Israelites to attend the corpse of relatives, and even the sacrificed one's. The Talmud also described the custom of claiming, anointing and wrapping the dead, but also visiting the tomb for three days, after the burial, to make sure that the deceased was really dead. Transfiguration and resurrection provoked astonishment among many devotees.

Visionary prophets like Ezekiel and mystical practitioners of Judaism considered this divine power as "the chariot" and divine chariot is nothing but the throne of God which was witnessed by Moses and his friends, Haron Nadab, Abihu and seventy leaders of Israel saw in its sapphire glory (Exodus 24.9-11).

Jesus Christ trained His disciples along with Mary from the time she met Him in Galilee till the time of His pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The disciples were covered by a shining cloud, of glory, also heard a voice. "This is, my son, the beloved in whom I take pleasure, hear Him". When the cloud passed from the place Moses and Elijah the greatest prophets of Israel, also disappeared and Jesus stood alone there as the son of God, the Divine son. At the mouth of the tomb, Mary and her companions were taught by Jesus that God was the only ultimate truth the omnipotent, and the creator of the universe.

The transfiguration of Jesus and the vision of Mary Magdalene had a link with the throne of God. In that transfiguration Jesus appeared completely in a different form, shining with brilliance, Moses and Elijah the prophets were also there at that time. During the thirteenth century, Christians and Gnostics devoted Mary Magdalene, by virtue of her visions and meditations. Sometimes, through her meditations, she used to go to heaven and return. At the time of her death, she came out from her cave in the cliff of La Saint-Baum to take communion in the church of saint Maximin.

Mary Magdalene was portrayed in the legend before her death as the protector of a noble woman, and her new born child from ship wreck and starvation', she appeared to that woman in her vision and miraculously transported her to Jerusalem, and returned. She protected many pregnant women also with all such activities; Mary became the patron saint of fertility and child birth. The Golden Legend did the maximum in expressing her connection with the spirit rather than flesh and anointing, she practised in Galilee and also preached. The

compassion of Mary, to Sophia (wisdom) lay of the heart of both Gnosticism and catholic Christianity, because her divine wisdom and faith followed a process of restoration in the teaching of Mary. Therefore, what was described as her compulsion, to have sexual inter course was cured. She was finally able to accept the Father as the whole divine redeemer without expressing her former weakness. Faith and wisdom again took her place in the divine order. Her image as a redeemed prostitute took very deep root in the western Catholicism. Mary as readymade sinner gave scope to legends which described her as a prostitute and that in famous information remained for centuries.

The Catholic Church never questioned the chastity of Jesus Christ, but in one aspect the Cathars continued to influence Catholic theology. The Cathars somehow utilized the image of Mary, influencing Catholics and the protestants, who came after them and also the modern devotees. Devotion to Mary became diverse, at the same time it expressed deep conviction that made catholic theology coherent. Mary Magdalene the converted sinner Mary the sister of Lazarus of Bathany, and the Samaritan leper were an ideal representatives of that conviction, she symbolized like any other faithful believer and became “the sweet friend of God” The legends, the pilgrimages people made shrines that were built on her name and ritual practices, all were done within the reach of common man. In the year 1279 the crown prince of the house of “Anjore” ordered for the excavation of the church crypt at saint- Maximin in the province. Anjore was a very small kingdom, which was formed with some parts of France and Italy. It was said by one commentator as the prince himself took part in that excavation and dug a lot, until he got sweating. The prince was totally convinced that he would certainly find the remains of Mary. It is a fact that nobody can put a value of any precious relies.

The prince Anjore and the Medieval Europe had strong impression on the teachings of Saint Augustine. Once he said the relies of a saint did miracles of healing that made the people of Middle Ages have had strong belief in such incidents. According to the interpretation of Augustine during the fifth century of Common Era (C.E) the Millenarian prediction of revelation had truly begun on earth. The power and influence of Catholic Church, which Augustine called “Christiana Tempora” convinced him, and the prophecies of the revelation were unfolding that had been predicted. It is legally understood that God must be transforming the flesh of human beings into the flesh of eternity.

Augustine was a strong materialist with regard to Anti-Gnostic traditions of catholic Christianity. His firm belief was that all people would be resurrected with physical flesh, after the thousand year reign of the saints.

It is said, even emperor Constantine ordered for an excavation of the church called the “holy sepulchre” which was built by himself in the Christian colony in Jerusalem. As mentioned in the fifth century legend people found some nails in the excavation. It was also prompted by Helena the mother of Constantine. She too got a vision about the original cross of Jesus. She visited Jerusalem to find out the exact location of that cross. For many years the controversy went on about Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bathany, whether both Mary’s were the same or different persons. But only in 1909 the revised calendar of the saints authorized by the second “Vatican council” of the roman catholic church acknowledged that, Mary of Bathany and Mary Magdalene of Hegdal, both were different persons. Several pilgrimage centres claimed various parts of Mary’s skeleton when Charles of Saiemno made his “discovery”. Mary’s bones had been venerated for a long time in Vizelay, in Burgundy, which is in the North of province.

The Dominican friars who confidently kept the skeleton of Mary Magdalene produced their book called “The book of the miracle saint Mary Magdalene”. It revealed how the bones of Mary healed people in saint Maximin. In this context a franciscan member established a story of a butcher who went to venerate Mary in saint-Maximin involved in a fight. The reason for the fighting seems that a man of doubt about the healing of people by the bones of Mary. The butcher killed the other man. Then Mary assured him in a vision that he would not be taken by gallows. It is really amazing as she sent a Dove to dissolve the chain by which he was going to be hanged.

Sometimes the chronology turns itself stumbled over recording the wonders done by saints like Mary Magdalene of saint Maximin. The inheritance of Mary is not for Christianity alone or for Judaism. She lived before the separation of those two religions. And her native place Magdala was influenced by the exchange of products, and ideas that came from India, China and Nabatia. Mary’s sacraments were used by those who followed the centuries old practice by women in Galilean Judaism. So to say her life itself was a sacramental biography.

THE ANTI – CHRIST TO RULE HIS BEASTLY EMPIRE

Most of the believers of the world are under the impression that the Anti-Christ is coming very soon before the entire humanity is out of the dreadful darkness to engage himself in the final wickedness. At the same time we cannot correctly say the time of his arrival with all his pomp and show. One thing is sure, he is anticipated at any moment on the stage of the world. He will be seen on the stage with the character of Anti-Christ. It is the belief of some Godly and some Bible readers as well as teachers that the church will be raptured before the appearance of this showy and shadowy figure called Anti-Christ on the stage of the World.

It is also mentioned in the bible that certain unhappy and dangerous events would take place as symptoms to indicate the end of the age. At this critical situation God's people and believers must be alert always to face any type of calamities of that evil shadow. When this shadow figure comes to lime light, he will hate every one of us. He does not love or like any one because it is the true nature of his mental setup. The main reason for his hatred of human beings is because people love and worship the immortal God whom he does not like and whom people love most. This shadowy figure whom we call Anti-Christ is not an imaginary person but he is as real as our immediate neighbor. As soon as he comes, he may check you and those whom you like better.

According to the word of God, the Anti-Christ at present is held somewhere or restrained by somebody. If it is not true, then evil and wickedness in the world would have come dramatically worse than they are at present. The moment the Anti-Christ is let loose the Great Tribulation period will begin what is taking place at present in the world suggests that whatever is hindering the Anti-Christ may release him shortly. The reason prompted some people to quest for identifying the empire of this Anti-Christ is going on.

Therefore some wise men who are anticipating some unfavourable events, suggesting us to be careful and ready to face any kind of attack that is coming upon the earth at the earliest. So, the people must try to understand the peculiar

nature and character of the Anti-Christ and his beastly empire. That is to say the Anti-Christ is like a deadly rattle-snake, ready to attack and bite the believers at any moment. And for this strange biting there is no anti-dose. The evil and death he brings shall be in the physical and spiritual reality. As a matter of fact, there is a powerful primitive method that can protect eternal souls from this venomous attack. In such circumstances protection of the believers is the redemption plan of Jesus Christ. To speak the truth, there are no more human beings, who have wonderful security on earth than the loved ones of the savior.

The Anti-Christ will try to check us thoroughly, and while doing so, some of us even become martyrs. In spite of various attempts he will experiment on us as a trouble maker there is one thing that can never do. That is, he cannot take away our eternal salvation. The above said information may cause some mental disturbance to majority of the believers. But, this situation will help people to live boldly and triumphantly for Christ, during the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24.21-22). As mentioned in the bible the Great Tribulation period will begin at the middle of Prophet Daniel's Seventieth week. (which is commonly known as the seven year Tribulation period) which will be cut short or (amputated) with the Lords coming in the clouds to rapture the true church and commence His day of the Lord's Wrath upon the people, who are not repented till then.

In order to acquire more information about the Anti-Christ we must look into Apostle John; we have to praise Apostle John, only who has prevailed direct reference of the agent of Satan. Apostle John called this agent, four times as the Anti-Christ (1 John 2.18-22, 4.3-22, 2 John 1.7). Actually this Anti-Christ is a title; but not his name. The name of the son of God is "Jesus". So, His name is Jesus, where as "Christ" is His title or office. As we say, office of the King, office of the governor, and office of Christ. To speak technically Jesus is the Christ. And when we say Jesus is the Christ, it means He is the Messiah the Anointed One or savior. The Anti – Christ will oppose the true Christ and will try to do more harm than anything.

Apostle John clearly pointed out the attacks of the Anti – Christ against the humanity of Jesus Christ (Thessalonians 2.22) and the duty of Jesus (John 1.7). The first prophecy of the Bible speaks about the 'Seed' of the woman will crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3.15). Man was created in the "Divine design" to rule the earth, under the control of God. But because of man's sin

Satan usurped the right of man to rule the earth. Then the only one who could redeem man's last inheritance was no other than the Messiah.

Result of sin:

- 1) Death entered the world.
- 2) We are separated from God.
- 3) We became Strangers to each other (God and man)
- 4) We became subjects of God's Judgment.
- 5) We became slaves to sin.
- 6) The whole creation was corrupted.

According to the Bible the seed is always linked to the male. It is said in Genesis 3.15 that the redeemer is the seed of the woman. This wonderful prophecy prompted the virgin birth of Christ. So, this is called the perfect humanity and undiminished deity. As a result of virgin birth Jesus is taken for granted that He was one hundred percent man and one hundred percent God. Jesus is the God man and this solid truth the Anti-Christ and his followers will vainly attempt to change fact. In doing so the Anti-Christ will tragically pursue and force billions of people to take his mark and doing like that they pledge their loyalty to Satan.

It is already mentioned previously four times the term Anti-Christ by Apostle John. It is referred very briefly and specifically. Though this is a short reference this should not be considered a conclusion that the word of God does not have a great deal to speak about the Anti-Christ. The reality is undoubtedly brief and opposite we can find some of such references about Satan's Progeny offspring. They are:

- 1) The Anti-Christ is the man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2.3). He not only commits sin but also he is the personification of sin.
- 2) The Anti-Christ is the son of perdition. (2 Thessalonians 2.3)
- 3) The Anti-Christ is empowered by Satan (2 Thessalonians 2.9 and revelation 13.9) The Anti-Christ will be specifically empowered by Satan $3^{1/2}$ years, during the second half of Daniels Seventieth week.
- 4) The Anti-Christ is the little horn (Daniel 7.8). This little horn is a reference who will form a confederation of nations; most probably an Islamic caliphate? In his plan to rule the world. It is common among the animals that they use

their horns while fighting with other animals and try to dominate. But in the case of Anti-Christ, is that his horn becomes a symbol of power and then to speak of the king or supremacy.

It is said in Revelation 13.1-10 that a beast will arise out of the sea (probably out of Gentile out of the Mediterranean Sea region). According to the prophecy this beast will blasplime God, make war against God's people and rule over many nations. In revelation 13.11-18 there is a mention of second beast (probably Jewish) will arise out of the land. This beast is called a false prophet who is exactly like the first beast. He will be given more powers by Satan. He will perform some miracles also to confirm his messages as authentic. This wrong step will take place, with the main purpose of misleading the people toward the Anti-Christ. At the time of His "Olivet Discourse" Jesus clearly pointed out His coming back and also about the last days. In addition to that He mentioned about the false (Pseudo) Christ and false(Pseudo) prophets. This is the crystal clear picture of the two beasts written in the book of Revelation.

Apostle Paul wrote to the Church of Thessalonian members, the activities of the Anti-Christ in the following lines. "For the mystery of the iniquity cloth already work", that is the spirit of the Anti-Christ was manifested in the apostle's own day. Only he who now letteth will let until he is taken out of the way (2 Thessalonians 2.7). The expression in old English "only he who now letteth will let" has also been appropriately translated only he who knows hinderth will now continue to hinderth.

The true identification of the person is actually troubling us became an important issue from the confused prophecy. The correct time of his stopping to hinder will be extremely a great help to understand what is going to happen at the end of the age, which is being hindered at present is the mystery of iniquity and spirit of Anti-Christ. Then he tried to set up his image in the Temple of King Solomon on the Mount Moriah and pollute it miserably. This action will take place at the middle of the seventieth week. After this is done the Anti-Christ will demand first that Israel then the whole world must give him allegiance, so that the issue which is hindering will be taken out of the way and as a result, he will arise to power for 3^{1/2} years.

So, the identification of that which is hindering has become an important topic for favourable consideration; the historical background of the Church for the last 2000 years, has been divinely sanctioned “human government” or law. It has been continuously hindering. So to say, with the emergency of the Anti-Christ human government and law breaks down and consequently stops to hinder. As a result of that the Anti-Christ is unhindered in his advance toward domination. Within the last 150 years pre- tribulation raptures have frequently identified the redeemer as the Holy Spirit. Such a view serves to complement their position. Because of this a number of new problems exist for this view.

If we look into the Scripture probably we don't find any identification of the restrainer or hinderer as the Holy Spirit, who is directly hindering the ministry of sin whether in the context of Thessalonians or anywhere else in the Bible. It is acknowledged that once the Holy Spirit is present in a believer it will naturally purify him or her in the world. So, the effectiveness of the Holy Spirit depends upon the spirituality of a particular Church whatever may be the meaning of the language used it (2 Thessalonian 2.7) does not give any clue or authentic information regarding the constrainer even through the indirect or unauthorized information.

What is expressed here? Until he be taken out of the way (2 Thessalonian 2.7) can be translated literally “became out of the midst” and midst more literally means “middle”. So the outcome of all that is the restrainer stands between or we can also say “in the middle”. But according to a great scholar, “Lenski” the restrainer will get out of the way at the appropriate time yet there is no context or conference in the (2 Thessalonian 2.7) that the restrainer will become the environment and goes to heaven. This is the opinion of some who taught that the restrainer is the Holy Spirit. As they say, the restrainer simply stops his restraining work and goes out of the way.

As usual the pre-Tribulation view is that, if the Church is raptured the Holy Spirit is also taken away from the church; because the Holy Spirit used to dwell in the Church only. According to the Scripture we have noticed the restrainer will never go to heaven. But it is said simply he will go out of the way. The main point is he will stop himself, from restraining. The major issue is that the restrainer will try his best, for the removal of the Church is raptured, the restrainer is also removed.

If we take it for granted the Holy Spirit is the restrainer and he is also removed pre- tribulation ally from the earth and taken to heaven then it is not possible to give correct account of the Holy Spirit's active and dynamic ministry during the seventieth week of Daniel. It is noticed clearly about the Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world. To speak the truth the Church has been unable to achieve this fact in 2000 year time. We have to take it for granted, as it must be constant effort of newly saved believers that are going to accomplish in the seven years period which the church is unable to do it in 2000 years. What all is explained in detail so far, is going to happen in the physical presence of the Anti-Christ and without the Holy Spirit's fullness of ministry.

The Lord, the God, while He was speaking about the seventieth week of Daniel in detail, disclosed. But, when they shall lead you and deliver you up take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak neither ye do premeditate but whatever shall be given you in the hour that speak ye for it is not ye that speak but the Holy Ghost(Mark 13.11). Almighty God spoken again in connection with the seventieth week. He said But when they deliver you up take no thought how or what ye shall speak for it shall be given you in that same hour what but the spirit of your father which speaketh in you" (Matthew 10.19-20).

The ministry done by the Holy Spirit is quite conspicuous and it can never be under estimated. The ministry work is really great as claimed in the old Testament here and there to explain it further, there is not a single verse in the scripture that pointed out or hinted regarding the decreasing position of the ministry of the Holy Spirit; especially during the crucial time of seventieth week. All this is clearly said in the book of Daniel. Another striking point is added to this important topic. It is said in the book of Acts 2.32.33.the present fullness of the ministry of the Holy Spirit rests on the resurrection, ascension and exaltation of Jesus Christ. Since they are historical facts, nobody can do anything against such open truth.

The Historical proofs for such important topics would add strength and confirmation for the future generations. They can certainly give an assurance of the eternal abundance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Its temporary withdrawing is regression to the "beggarly" (Galatians 4.9) elements and premature status of the old covenant as it would amount to an involvement of Christ's exaltations.

It is finally concluded that the restrainer is neither the Holy Spirit nor the human government and also there is no historical or Biblical evidence to support anyone of them. But we have substantial proof for the identification of the true restrainer until “he be taken out of the way”. After a long discussion it is decided upon the true restrainer that he is no other than the Arc angel Michael. To call this Michael as restrainer there is strong and official evidence.

I hope this brief note would suffice to know who the real restrainer is because we are going to hear more about him. For further evidence let us see some more examples that can uphold our assessment about him. The arch angel Michael has been recognized long ago by both Jewish and Christian scholars that he is having special guardian relationship with Israel as mentioned in (Daniel 10.21). It is said that his direct relationship is quite clear. When he says he is Michael “Your Prince”, “holdeth” which means to bind or restrain. This Michael has restraining or hindering ministry on behalf and for the protection of Israel. It is clearly described in Revelation 12.6,13,14 in the following way.

“And there was war in heaven Michael and his angels fought against the dragon”..... And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth he persecuted the woman who had given birth to the male child (Revelation 12:7-13).

Here, the woman represents the nation of Israel who gave child, the man (child) to the world (Revelation 12.5) who will be severely persecuted during the great Tribulations(12.13-17). While we are talking about the person who is going to hinder the Anti-Christ apostle Paul said, “only he who now letteth means to stop will let, “until he be taken out of the way” (2 Thessalonians 2.7). the word “letteth” literacy means “to hold back” and the phrase taken out of ways means to stop aside ; get the person who does the work of hindering the Anti-Christ will stop aside. Then he will be no longer restrained between the Anti-Christ and those whom he wants to persecute.

It is written in the Bible about the main point that the arch angle is the true person who will step aside and Prophet Daniel had recorded that further information in his book in the following manner..... “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince, which standeth for the children of the people and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that the same times” (Daniel 12.1).

At this stage, we have to remember an essential point. That is, when the restrainer is going to be taken out of the way. It is said in the preceding verse, “And he shall plant the Tabernacle of his palace between the seas in the Glorious Holy Mountain (Daniel 11.45). This question can be referred to the Anti- Christ only who will establish his headquarters between the Dead Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea on the glorious Holy Mountain the Jerusalem. This is going to happen in the middle of the seventieth week and the desecration of his own image or statue in the Temple.

Prophet Daniel said already enough about Michael that he would stand up during the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time. This unprecedented time of trouble can refer only to the “Great Tribulations”. Since Daniel gave all the details of the great trouble, it was noteworthy to refer to his own people the Jews and this time could also be called the time of Jacob’s trouble which was a synonym for Great Tribulation. It was exactly the same time the arch angel Michael would stand up. Then what must be the correct meaning of that expression “And at that time shall Michael stand up”.

Rashi was one of the greatest teachers of Israel. His Hebrew scholarship was unquestionable and unchangeable. Though he was no way concerned to the correct time of the rapture, he tried to explain the meaning of “stand up”. In Hebrew it is called “amad”. It means “stand still” as used in Daniel 12.1 Michael in the early days. But now he has planned to stand still or stand aside. It seemed now not to fight nor to restrain nor to hold down. We have some other information from a scholar. It was Mr. Young whose Analytical “Concordance” to the Bible tells us that “amad” means “To stand still” or fast. And Strong’s concordance tell us the meaning of “amad” as “cease” and one of his definitions as “stand still”.

This phrase is further explained clearly in the following manner. If a man is reclining or seated and is referred to “amad” he will “stand up”. If a person is standing and active and refers to amad he will “stand still”. In fact the arch angel already found Israel. Then to “amad” means he would “stand still”, “cease” or “desist” his defense on their behalf. There are some more Biblical meanings for the Hebrew word “amad” like “to be still” or “thing stood still” (desisted) and answered no more (Job 32.16). And Ezra opened the book, in the sight of all the

people (for he was above all the people and when he opened it, all the people “stood up” (Nehemiah 8.5).

Rashi, the Hebrew scholar commented on this word and indicated that the people kept quiet (stood still) while Ezra read the Torah. Rashi commented about Daniel 12.1, the holy one said, “Blessed be to Michael”. You are silent”, “you donot defend my children”. The arch angel, who had been completely involved with standing for Israel, will in the middle of the Seventieth week “stand still”, desist of stand aside and close to stand for her. The word of God gives certain reason for the creation of the restrainers work, briefly that point of work. Because the Israelites had rejected their true Christ and refused God as the God of their forefathers and redeemer, so He wanted to punish them by sending strong delusion, so that the people of Israel would believe in the lie and accept Anti-Christ. That is the reason why God wants to handover Israelites for some time, with the hope to see them repented and look for God. And the purpose of handing over Israelites was explained by Apostle Paul in the following verses – “They received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall, send them Strong delusion that they should believe a lie that they all might be dammed who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness”. (2 Thessalonians 2.10-12).

So, according to God’s plan a strong delusion comes from Him. The main purpose of it is in order to purify Israelites with His judgment. That is the main reason why even Michael arch angel does not want to hinder or hold down to wicked ones. Another popular writer Leon Wood said in his book, “A commentary on the Daniel” commented on the expression “the breaking up of the power of the holy people”, (Daniel 12.7) wrote The angel thus revealed the reason for God’s permitting the Anti-Christ to bring his persecution namely to break the power of the Jews, so that the Jews would be willing to accept Christ as their Messiah and their own rightful king, when their power is broken.

This observation naturality provides perfect logic for view that on this occasion and for this purpose Michael will stand still. He will not fight for Israelites. The moment Michael stops fighting or defending Israelites the times of Jacobs troubles will begin (Jeremiah 30.7). Here let us try to understand the clear and parallel forcing between the action of Michael in the old Testament. “And at that time, stand up (literally) still or resist from helping Israelites, the

great prince which standeth, whose normal and continuous ministry had been to help Israel (Daniel 12.1) with in the new Testament He who now hindered (restrain) will continue to hinder, until he be taken out of the way. Ceases to continue his normal and continuous ministry of restraining (2 Thessalonians 2.7) is unmistakable. Apostle Paul seemed to have Daniel 12.1 in his mind when he wrote 2 Thessalonians 2.7, and therefore no need to name the restrainer specially. The clear and compelling illusion to Daniels 12th chapter would indicate that the restrainer is no other than the arch angel.

So, the present activity and the events will have a dramatical impact on the entire world. These events will clearly signal the coming of the King of kings very soon. As soon as He comes He will resurrect all the dead in Christ and rapture judgment of the wicked during the “Day of the Lord” and be indicated against all evil. If you read the Bible thoroughly, you will take it for granted that the book of Revelation gives full details of Jesus Christ than any other book. One can understand very clearly, regarding the events which are associated with His second coming and also about the final battle of the history called the battle of Armageddon.

Our unquenchable thirst here is to know more about the past played by the Anti-Christ, the nations involved in his temporary kingdom and his ultimate defeat in the battle of Armageddon. For the purpose of knowledge of this book, the book of Revelation Apostle John introduced to the readers a harlot in the Seventeenth chapter of his book Revelation. He gave a wonderful description of her in the following way – “Mystery Babylon the Great, the mother of Harlots and Abominations of the earth” (Revelation 17.5) Truly, this is not the correct way of introducing a lady to the public. But this lady did not come from a respectable family. She was the mother of all false religions. With whatever name it is called, or in whatever country it is located.

If we look at the Biblical history these religions originally began at the tower of Babel (Mystery Babylon) and immortal activities have been going on even at this hour. She used to dress and behave like a prostitute. And she was arrayed in purple and scarlet color and decked with gold and precious stones full of abomination and filthiness of her fornication. This mother Harlot is up to anything to fulfill her purpose of seducing both men and women who are away from the true and living God to embrace Satan and his Kingdom. She is said to

become intoxicated with the blood of martyrs, those who were faithful to Christ (Revelation 17.6).

John studied the wonderful character of the Harlot and confounded at her success. He simply wondered how she could divert many people away from the Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world to embrace an evil and wicked imposter. For all his careful observation in his dream John got quick answer from an angel. The harlot has been carried on the back of a beast through history and that beast had seven heads and ten horns. To say more clearly those false religions were added by governments throughout ages. This is the suitable explanation for the wonderful success of the Harlot.

Then the angel gave to John further explanation, and here is the mind, which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains and those mountains are a reference to kingdoms. We can see this reference in (Daniel 2.35,44). And those seven kingdoms are associated with seven kings undoubtedly there must be more than seven kings, but the kings and kingdoms referred here to have particular significance. The angel gave John a brief history about the kings and kingdoms. He said, those kings and kingdoms had one common feature. They were all enemies of Israel because they were enemies to God and His son who was the rightful heir to Davidic throne of Israel.

Then the falling of those kingdoms is wonderfully described. According to the Biblical history, the first kingdom that fell miserably was Egypt and the fallen king was Pharaoh, who was brutally ordered for the murder of all Jewish male children by the midwives at the time of their birth itself (Exodus). The second kingdom was Assyria and the fallen king was Shalmonset who took the Northern ten tribes of Israelites into captivity in about 722 B.C; in the war, and ill-treated them to the maximum (2 kings 17.18). The third kingdom was Babylonian and the king was Nebuchadnezzar who attacked Jerusalem three times in 606 B.C, 598 B.C and 586 B.C. (2 kings 24). During that attack he destroyed the Temple on the Mount Moriah. Then he happened to pluck out the eyes of the last Davidic dynastic ruler Zedekiah. And before this action he was forced to watch the heinous murder of his sons.

The fourth kingdom was Medo-Persia and the fallen king was Haman. He hated the Jews and Mordecai and passed a decree to execute all the Jews in the kingdom (Esther 3.13). Fortunately the intervention of the Queen Esther

saved all Jews from the execution. The fifth kingdom was Greece and the king who had fallen was not Alexander the Great; He really treated the Jews pretty well. But after his sudden death his empire was divided among four generals. And among them, the worst one was Antiochus Epiphanies. He tried his best to wipeout Judaism and the Mosaic law and wished to replace the worship of the heathen idol Jupiter.

The sixth kingdom was still in existence at the time of John writing the book of Revelation in 90 A.D. the kingdom was Roman Empire and the ruler Caesar was still alive. The Caesar at that time was “Domitian”. The seventh kingdom is yet to come to persecute the Jewish people. We are told about the seventh kingdom and the king and when he comes, he will continue for a very short time. But the name of the king and kingdom are left to the discretion of the reader. This brings us back to the Anti-Christ of whom we have to discuss more. And the beast the Anti-Christ that was and is not seven he is the eighth (Revelation 17.11).

Let us see this again briefly –

- 1) The first kingdom was Egypt and its kings persecuted God’s people Israelites.
- 2) The second kingdom was Assyria. The kings of that heathen country wiped out the identity of Israelites. This Assyria at present became almost three countries called Iraq, Iran and Syria.
- 3) The Third kingdom was Babylon and the present name of this kingdom is modern Iraq.
- 4) The fourth kingdom was Medo-Persia which later became Iran. It also persecuted Israelites.
- 5) The fifth kingdom was Greece and at present it is called Syria. This kingdom has also persecuted Israelites.
- 6) The sixth kingdom was Roman Empire and at present it is called “Italy”. North Africa, much of the Middle East, and especially Turkey. This kingdom persecuted Israelites to the maximum.
- 7) The seventh kingdom is unknown. It will also persecute Israelites and the kingdom may survive for a short time. Some scholars refered this story to the ottoman Turkey (turk) or possibly to the “third Ruch”.

- 8) The eighth kingdom according to Biblical history is the kingdom of a beast the Anti-Christ and he will be the final persecutor of Israelites (Revelation 17.11). Here there are two most important points that can speak about the Anti-Christ and his kingdom.
- 1) The first point is he must be one of the seven that are already referred to who was the real force behind them throughout history as Satan's offspring progeny. So, the Anti-Christ and his kingdom, should be looked for in the region North of Israel, including Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq and the area between the Black Sea and Caspian sea and Just North of Caucasus Mountains. The fact is those regions are completely Muslims at present.
- 2) The second point is the Anti-Christ and the other kings that follow him will be destroyed. And the main source of their destruction is the Lamb of God, who is also called "the Lords of Lord and the King of kings" and the people with Him are His chosen ones and the faithful (Revelation 17.14). Finally the word of God allows to think of nothing but battle for two Millennia. Some eminent scholars gave their opinion stating that search is necessary to find out the Anti-Christ and his Kingdom in the world.

So, in conclusion let us watch the personalities that

Emerge from the kingdoms who persecuted Israel. And also, let us observe its day to day changes and for the assessment of how close we are to see this man of perditions to play his role from behind curtain.

We must remain strong and March forward to see the fulfillment of prophesies in our life. We must remember the Bible Quotations "you shall be hated of all men for my name sake; But he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10.22). You shall have the privilege of remaining here and endure to the end. Just before the rapture when the world appears spinning completely and becomes out of control one can feel comfortable with the following words which are quoted from the Gospel of Luke which describe the condition on the earth at the time of the coming of Jesus Christ on the clouds.

And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars and upon the earth, distress, of the nation with perplexity the sea and the waves roaring Men's hearts falling for fear and
 pass them
 look up and lift up your heads for redemption draweth nigh (Luke 21.25-28).



ANTI - CHRIST

JERUSALEM WITH THREE FAITHS ABRAHAM AS THEIR FATHER

Judaism was considered by many scholars as the oldest of the three Monotheistic religions. According to Biblical history as mentioned in the “Terah” or the law of Prophet Moses about 2,600 years ago, this Judaism provided basis for Christianity and later for Islam. Moses the servant of God received the laws for Israelites on the top of Mount Sinai. It is strongly believed by the Muslims that prophet Muhammad also received the “word” of ‘Allah’ from the same place.

Let us see, how these religions came into existence. The first one is Christianity. In a small agricultural village called Ephratah (Bethlehem) in the nation of Israel a child was born to a Jewish virgin through a message from God, by an arch-angel Gabriel. His name was Jesus Christ 2000 years ago. His birth was foretold by prophets. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and called Himself the Son of God. He became a charismatic preacher and attracted all kinds of people. He gathered disciples only from fishermen who were very common people. The Son of God as the disciples called Him did many miracles, healed the sick and raised the dead. On one occasion, He happened to control the disturbed water in the Sea of Galilee and walked on the water also. He was the embodiment of power and glory. Such deity was finally blasphemed and brutally killed on the cross. But His followers by keeping His cross on their shoulders and by going to every nook and corner preached the word of God. The followers of Jesus were instructed to do so before He went to heaven to His Father. So, on His name, the religion Christianity came into existence and ultimately became world’s greatest religion.

THE NEXT ONE IS ISLAM

According to history about 1,300 years ago, a man was visited by an arch-angel Gabriel in Mecca and received a wonderful gift from him. It was the gift of a “word” from “Allah” the one God, and that man was no other than prophet Muhammad as per the faith of Muslims. Then he wrote a sacred book to the Muslims called “the Koran” which ultimately represented the truth as prophet Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, which were called “Pentateuch”. Muhammad as a prophet took his message across a desert to Medina

and near to the hills of Mount Sinai. He created the religion finally and called it “Islam”. As a result, he became the founder of “Islamic religion”

Yerushalayim is the Hebrew name for Jerusalem (which means the House of peace). Apart from this, it has about 8 other names. In Arabic Jerusalem is called “BaytatMuqaddas”. This town was in existence from the time of Abraham, about 4000 years ago. We have some authentic information from the book “The Roots of Mount Hararat” written by “Melchezidec” a great grandson of Noah. As said in that book, he was the founder of that city with the name “Salem”. We can see in the book of Genesis 14.18 as “Melchezidec king of Salem” and later it became Jerusalem. Such an old and important city, with so much historical background came under the control of Israelites politically only from 1947.

Yet religiously, Jerusalem remained as a strong hold for three Monolithistic religions, namely, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. And also, the people of these sets of religions have been living together in Old Jerusalem city in different quarters, namely Jews in Jewish quarters, Christians in Christian and Aramean quarters and Muslims in Muslim quarters. So Jerusalem is called the holiest city for three greatest religions. Jerusalem is a place of prophets and Martyrs; but always remained in tention and turmoil. In spite of all such calamities for centuries it has a promise and gift of eternal life and lurking prospects of sudden death.

It is better, if we can know briefly how the town Jerusalem came into existence. It is said once God visited Melchezidec, a Shepard boy. He anointed him and told him to go to a distant place that, He would show and build a town on His name. Accordingly, Melchezidec obeyed God and travelled a long distance. Then he laid a foundation for the town and called it “Salem”. He remained there permanently as a bachelor by serving bread and wine at the altar to the people. Later he was called the high priest and became the king of that town Salem. He also gave the name to that land of milk and honey as Canaan, which was the name of his grandfather and which became a promised land by God to the descendants of Abraham. Canaan was the grandson of Noah, who cursed him by saying “cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants” because of the fault of his father. But later Noah realized his mistake and told Canaan that curses sometimes would become blessings. And he blessed Canaan by saying a high priest of the most high God would be his seed and newpassword90599become king also. That was Malchezidec king of Salem, according to the prophetic words of Noah.

ABRAHAM AS THEIR FATHER

Abraham was the father of all religions believes of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. To say in nutshell, he was the roster of all holy people. In this connection we have to meditate upon three viewpoints regarding the test put to Abraham by God. In 18th century some Jewish painting and a Rembrandt from 17th century gave the impression that Abraham proposed to stay Isaac as a sacrifice to God as commanded by Him in order to test his faith toward Him where as in Turkish illustration Citra 1585, Abraham raised his knife to sacrifice Ismael. But in 'the Koran' it was not specifically mentioned which son was planned for sacrifice whatever might be the opinion of different scholars, Muslims had strong faith that God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son Ismael only and the place was not Mount Moriah in Jerusalem but Mecca.

While discussing seriously the present situation in the Middle East, it is quite reasonable to think about Jerusalem also, because the fundamental principle of Islamic religion and Christianity are totally different. They have been antagonistic to each other and history is the evidence. Even then if we go deep into the history those three religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam are one. Rather we can say Christianity and Islam were the children of Judaism. Further details or arguments can be started with Yaweh, or God or Allah to confirm, who the heart and soul of these three great religions is.

Before the rise of Judaism Christianity and Islam it is believed there was no plurality of Gods, but one supreme power as Abraham thought in his early days we will be surprized to see today that more than half of the world population follow the theology of one God and it is called Monotheism. The Jewish people followed this strictly and taught even to their children to remember "O Israel our Lord is God our God is one". For Christians one God in three forms, Father, son and the holy ghost and for Muslims "Allah". According to the latest statistics more than 2 Billion Christians 1.5 Billion Muslims and 10.5 Million Jews believe in the existence of one God. If these three sets are clubbed together automatically the number of Monotheistic believers would be more than the followers of pantheistic religions.

For our clear understanding let us start our topic with a great man Abraham who was a unique person Biblically and historically. He appeared in the earliest citation. We come across this extraordinary personality in the Hebrew and

Christian Bibles, in some documents and some of the early chapters in the Koran, regarding some traditions of his time. The Koran is the only sacred book of Islamic religion and it was composed by prophet Muhammad during 7th century AD. This Koran also shared many Biblical characters and stories.

In the first book of holy Bible the name “Abraham” is referred to “Father Love” or an exaltation of the Father. If we look into the Biblical genealogy, the first prophet Enoch comes under in 7th generation and Noah in 10th generation from the inception of the Bible. If we look into the genealogy of Noah, Abraham was the descendant of Shem and Shem was the first son of Noah. Then because of Shem his descendants were called Shemites or Shemitites. So, Abraham’s father Terah belonged to the tribe or clan of Shemites which was called later Shemitic tribe and from the town of Ur the land of Chaldeans in Mesopotamia.

It is said when Abraham was born there appeared a big star in heaven and swallowed four small stars. That unique occurrence was seen by King Nimrod and thought that Abraham would become a great man one day and cause some trouble to his kingdom. So he planned to buy Abraham and keep him in his house. Then one day Nimrod called Terah his father and told him, he wanted to buy his son. But Terah arranged someone in his place and sent Abraham to some unknown place for a while with his mother.

To-day as mentioned in the history this Ur became modern Iraq’s “Tall al Muqozzat” which is about 200 miles south east of Baghdad. In 2000 John Paul II while visiting the Holy land tried desperately to add Ur also as one of the visiting places, but he was bluntly rejected by the authorities. He thought visiting of the birth place of patriarch Abraham was as important as the Holy land. At that time, his visa for that particular place was rebuffed by Saddam Hussain, the dictator of Iraq. If we observe closely the genealogies of the Biblical characters and historical evidences, and if they are compared with modern Archaeological findings, Abraham seemed to have lived between 2100-1922 BC.

At that time Ur was not without heathen gods. There were multiple of gods and goddess for various purposes. Even in such circumstances Abram was not tempted either by his parents or brothers who were all idol makers and worshippers. His thinking was concentrated only on Monotheism the God of heaven, and so he was called the first patriarch of both Israelites and Arabs. The livelihood of Terah was to make idols and sell them and King Nimrod was one

of the regular customers for buying of his idols. It is said one day Abram happened to destroy all the idols in the house and Terah got angry and took him to the king. Abram was surprised to see the palace of the king was also full of Idols he broke them too. The immediately reacted. He fastened Abram with ropes and threw him into the fiery burning flames as Nebuchadnezzar did to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. But the ropes were burnt and the flames became water to cool Abram.

Most of the people of Ur were the worshippers of the “Sun” god. We all know King Nimrod built the “tower of Babel” only to worship the sun god from that height. But Abraham was a different man. He had a strong faith on a strange God from his early days, and so the idol worshippers used to call him. Hebrew which means ‘stranger’. On one occasion he was addressed as “Abram the Hebrew” (Genesis 14.13) by a man who escaped from the battle field and informed Abram that his nephew. Lot from Sodom was taken as a prisoner by the neighbouring enemies. This word Hebrew was used for the first time to address Abram. Later Moses was addressed by king pharaoh as Hebewean when he was identified as the son of a Hebrew slave family. And the wife of Potiphar called Joseph as Hebrew. She framed some false allegations against him and reported the same to her husband.

God wanted to see something extraordinary in the life of Abram. So He granted him faith and intelligence. This made him to observe the heavenly bodies from his childhood days, as how the Sun was giving bright light during day time and how the Moon and the stars twinkling during night time. These wonderful happenings magnified his mental calibre and came to a conclusion that some invisible power in heaven must be controlling all these changes and that invisible power was no other than God Almighty. Abraham’s mind became pregnant with the knowledge of Astronomy then he delivered this knowledge first to Egyptians and later to Greeks. This acquiring of knowledge of the heavenly bodies called him Father of western science. So God was with Abraham and guiding him at all stages.

According to scriptures the clan or the tribe of Abram used to migrate from one place to another like nomads before God taught him and gave some instructions to leave his native place once and for all and all his kith and kin in Ur, then to travel farther. God had a plan to make him great religiously and

bless his family in future. Then in their long journey every place his family walked was sanctified and became holy. After they left Ur the first town they came across was “Haran”. This town was in between Tigris and Euphrates rivers in North Mesopotamia. To-day this Haran is in the region of modern Turkey and at present this Turkey became most important place for the worshippers of the “Sun” god; and also a hopeful destination for the citizens of Ur.

Terah, the father of Abraham died in Haran at the age of 205 Lot his brother’s son also followed him from Ur in his journey. The next place they walked in was Napata near Aleppo. They continued their travel and reached Shedem then Bethel which is in North of Jerusalem. After that they walked into the South west to Egypt, and back to the oaks of Mamri which is in Hebron, according to the Book of Genesis. As time went on the property of both Abraham and Lot had increased and so they decided to leave separately and Lot preferred to stay in the city of Sodom which became notorious for immorality and wickedness.

Unfortunately, Sodom and Gomorah were attacked by the neighbouring kings and Lot was taken as a captive to their places. This news was brought to Abraham, by a man who escaped from the battlefield. He called him Abram the Hebrew and told him what had happened to his nephews. He immediately jumped into action with his most efficient 318 and killed most of them, and returned home with Lot and some property of the Kings. On the way, Abraham met the first high priest of the most high God Melchazidic at Salem (Jerusalem). Both felt happy for their meeting. Melchazidic served bread and wine to Abraham and presented his Sheperd stick that he used before he went to that place. Abraham was happy to receive that and in return he gave him tithe that he brought from the defeated kings.

After this incident, the custom of giving liths to God had been continued among the believers in all churches. Bringing Lot back, by fighting with powerful kings proved Abraham to be a great fighter. But the call from Almighty God for some noble purpose changed him completely. This call was actually prompted him to leave Ur the land of Chaldiens and fowned a new nation for his descendants in Canaan, which is in between Syria and Egypt. It is really wonderful to see all those countries Abraham trecked had different life at present. The countries Abraham passed through were Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Jordan before crossing

and recrossing Israel the west Bank and the Senai. The migration of Abraham from Ur the land of Chaldeans in Mesopotamia to Canaan the land of milk and honey really changed the history. Jews used to honour their heritage at the tombs of their patriarchs at Machpelah. Hebron, where Sarah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob his son were buried God wanted Abraham to take up such tedious journey. So that, he would be blessed with many off springs and his seed inherit all the land he surveyed. Accordingly God blessed Abraham with countless descendants like that of stars in heaven. Then God made a covenant with Abraham by saying "if his people remain faithful like him, Canaan with modern Palestine would be their everlasting possessions" (Genesis 17.4-9). On this point both the Bible and the Koran agreed to certain extent.

The Bible and the Koran elevated the personality of Abraham and the promise of God at the age of 75 years. Along with that promise his name was also changed from Abram to Abraham which means "Father of many nations" God blessed Israel and his descendants were blessed like countless stars and many Arabic nations came into existence. And those nations were called today Arab world or Arab Muslims. In the same way God blessed Jacob the grandson of Abraham and his descendants beyond comprehension. After the death of Abraham two places became popular as tourist centers for Jews and Muslims. They were Beersheba well and the burial ground of Abraham at Machpelah for 1000 years till the Temple of King Solomon in Jerusalem came into existence. Abraham bought that Machpelah area for his family burial ground for 400 sheekes of silver from Arunah "a land owner". The pilgrims from Jews and Muslims visited those two places regularly and they even quarrelled among themselves regarding the time of their visit. Finally that situation was averted when Solomon built God's Temple in Jerusalem after 1000 years about 1057 BC. After this Temple appeared physically, the pilgrims stopped going to those places and began to visit Jerusalem because it became the holiest place for three faiths Jews, Christians and Muslims after Mecca and Medina.

There was a story that went on from mouth to mouth for generations regarding the burial ground of Machpelah. As people talked about once a good number of pilgrims visited the burial ground, as usual, and while returning, one of them happened to forget his sword there. Then he went back to search for the sword, but to his surprise he saw Abraham was moving among the graves in white garments. As mentioned in Genesis 22.12-17. Abraham was the most

faithful man that God admired and honoured him, saying “I know that thou fearest God seeing thou have not withheld thy son, thy only son from me”. As a result God honoured him with abundant blessings. So, those who have faith like Abraham are called the children of Abraham. He became a close friend of God by his righteousness. By his faith on God and His word, he moved from Ur the land of Chaldies to a strange place which God showed him. He wandered like a gypse from place to place till he reached his destination. He was only a listener of the word of God. When God commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac, whom he got at the age of 99 years he simply obeyed His command and tried to sacrifice on the Mount Moriah. To-day we find a big golden dome on the spot where Abraham tried to slay his son, and that became a controversial issue for Jews and Muslims.

Having studied the wonderful character of the patriarch Abraham, what we can learn from his character and way of life. He won the favour of God only by his unbounded faith. So, without faith as believers it is impossible to please God and win His love to get our things done through prayer. Therefore, let us look at Abraham for all his noble qualities in order to follow his faithful life, and then by looking unto Jesus we can run the race to reach our eternal goal.

Abraham became famous with many extraordinary gifts and credits. With all his merits, he was called :

Father of western science
Father of Righteousness
Father of Circumcision

Father of western Religion
Father of unbounded Faith
Father of many nations

HIS GENEALOGY

Noah and his wife Naamah. Their first son Shem and his wife Sindra Shem's descendants were called Shemites or Shemitites. Then Terah and his wife Amedia, parents of Abraham were from Shemites tribe. Later they were called Semitic tribe. So Abraham belonged to Semitic tribe in Ur, the land of Chaldeins in Mesopotamia.

In conclusion I can say without doubt that there must be some more unique things about Abraham. If everything goes well I would like to collect some more new information from any source and that depends upon the availability because he occupied a very important place in the Bible in the Jewish history and in the Koran.

HISTORY OF ASIAN RELIGIONS

It is a naked truth that any religion is a universal fact of human experience in this life and it is never about only wherever human history. So, one scholar called that man is defined as religious animal. Such an idea of universality of religion is congenial to the Judea Christian tradition. The writer of the Old Testament in the book of Psalms declared for understanding that the “heavens as the glory of God and the firmament sloweth his handi – work”. Again there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. The whole word is encompassed by the glory and the handi – work of the Almighty God. The Hebrews began their explosion to the Jews of his time in the throne of culmination of their hopes in Jesus as their Messiah.

The historians of both Judaism and Christianity provided more evidence and did not grow like mushrooms in darkness. Both of the religious progressed more powerfully and established. Due to this there were some vital changes in pagan religion also. Judaism and Christianity were well aware that they were not the only religion in this world. There are some other religion in India as well as in other countries. Which possess the awareness of themselves. The character of any religion in general is highly complex and universal. So, it is quite necessary and appropriate to give some introduction about the true nature of religion itself. For the purpose of correct understanding let us study about four important religions of Asia namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. These four religions which are originated in India are like Judaism and Christianity. These major important religions mankind possessed in the world. They might have been approached by people, from the stand point of basic understanding of the religion itself.

Religions in general are classified in a variety of ways. The four religions we are talking about in this article are limited by their geographical sources. These religions are confined to particular area of Asia, prior to 1947. (when the British withdrew as a colonial power). It was known as in many aspects historical and cultural background that made India survived to the present day inspite of the influence of Colonialism India was split into two countries during the second

world war, politically. But here we are dealing with the religion Geographically, but not connected to political matters, how India and Pakistan were separated.

Historically Buddhism was founded in India, but spread throughout Asian countries. But Hinduism, Jainism and Sikhism remained within India and Pakistan only. Let us study about these religions in chronological order. According to history, Hinduism was the first and the oldest religion in the world various scholars were of the opinion, that it was born about 2000 BC. Then the Sikhism is said to be the youngest religion. The birth of Sikhism had a link with its founder guru Nanak. He was born in 1469. The other religions are like Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Jainism, Judaism, Shintoism, Taoism and Zoroastrianism. These above mentioned religions may be considered as living religions. But there are some more other religions which must be either living or dead. Those were connected to the ancient societies.

They were Phoenicia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Babylonia, Mexico and Pure. Regarding these religions, some scholars are not sure of their existence to-day in the world. And the four religions that are going to be discussed in this topic are still alive. There are some religions which may be considered in terms of their aspiration of universality. Such great religions are only three that proclaim universal acknowledgement. They are Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. The English word, "religion" is derived from Latin "religia".

At times the deeper meaning of religion is not at all signified by the use of that word or words connected to it. For example it has been suggested that religion is primarily an intelligent activity. This saying appears to be correct, that religion is identified with theology and philosophy. This would provide an intellectually definable explanation of the created order. Religion may be feeling of dependence upon the divine power under all circumstances in our life. It may involve positive emotional experiences such as joy and wonder experiences that are exceptional to the ordinary living. It is a general fact that in any religion, morality plays very important role. In other words, the code or core of religion consists of commandments of ethical conduct. And the nature of religion has been defined as the implantation of the noblest social values provided by a concerted society. And also religion will possess many a social function. Let us examine two points which may help us to understand correctly. The first and foremost point and function of a religion is to maintain social order. Then every

social order requires the sanctification of different approved methods for the well – being of the individual. Second point is religion has the function of sustaining the equilibrium of the individual. It is filled with various experiences and sometimes throw men into a condition of imbalance. Throughout life man is threatened by the inescapable death. There is valuable meaning to the idea that religion is the institutionalized ethics of a society or of a group in the society. The nature of religion is sometimes confusing or contrasted with the nature of magic, morality and science. To say in brief the investigation of the relationship between their characteristics will increase the understanding of the true nature of the religion.

Generally people who are sceptical about the validity of the claims of religions will simply say that all religions are basically magic. This assurance is based on the assumption that religion and magic are false Religion and magic are both similar and dissimilar. They are closely related or identical at a number of points. Normally they do not seek to supplement science and its methods. Both religion and magic involve a ritual system. A ritual is rarely created to be performed only one's Religion and magic are co-related. They may be valued as dissimilar. Several anthropologists had shown primitive peoples have differences on the subject of priests layman, magician, client relationship. As a matter of fact, religion and morality are like religion and magic which bear an ambiguous relationship between them.

This ambiguity is partly described and partly through dispute among the anthropologists. This argument is what came from between those in human history. Some experts came to an understanding that religion came first. The true relationship between religion and morality can be described in three ways. The people believe that their quest for the eternal salvation is separated from the moral values. The point is religion and morality are closely related and even identical. For example, to most of the Jewish people, it would be different to agree that the Ten Commandments are just moral bindings and same as the case with Christian morality.

Jews and Christians would uphold the moral laws of respective religions is not at all qualified looked at essentially either as Jewish or Christians. They believe in the moral codes which reflect the will of God. However in western societies where the Judeo – Christian traditions provide religion and morality

have not been always viewed as intrinsically interrelated. Many western Jews and Christians have been more concentrated with moral matters than with abstract theology connected to the church. Religion and morality may be seen as different things but they must be interrelated.

These two bear a very complex relationship with each other. By no means, they can be assumed to be identical. Casteism in India for example plays a pivotal role and so to say a cardinal feature of the social organization. Like different castes in India there are also various customs in Hinduism which are quite distinct social features in spite of their separateness. Their interlinked morality, the maintenance of the highest ethical standard are concerted basically with human relationship.

HINDUISM

The most popular religion in India is Hinduism. It is considered if oldest world's living religion. Some scholars put the date of its birth about 2000 BC. And may agree that the historical period of Dharma and Hinduism began with the invasion of Aryan tribe somewhere about between 1500 and 1200 BC. When Shintoism is the international religion of Japan, Judaism is also ancient one. But these religions cannot be compared with the oldest religion Hinduism. It is also one of the largest living religion. Some of the largest religions are – Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism and Islam. Hinduism is certainly noteworthy for its largeness and more members of adherents.

Hinduism is further notable because it has mothered. Some other religions than other contemporary faith and most of the existing religions are context by themselves. A notable exception is Judaism with forms baseless to two more living religions namely Christianity and Islam. Hinduism has given birth to three more religions called Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Among them it is only Buddhism that eventually crossed the believers of India and entered some countries in Asia.

These three religions have developed with different principles and customs. They developed their own history also. Now let us consider the four religions Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism separately and what their fundamentals are for our understanding. In this context, the readers are advised to keep in mind one thing that is all these religions have close relationship as far

as observances are concerned. They are bound together and the most important thing is they have all grown up in a single complex curtain. So, they can be compared to a tree. The common root system is Indian culture. The trunk of the tree religiously speaking is Hinduism, the other religions which are treated as her children can be called the branches of that tree. The trunk and the branches can be studied separately but their relationship is lesser and most wonderful.

Actually, Hinduism achieved fundamental understanding of reality and life. But the other three religions are limited to their own way of life. Hinduism no doubt distinctive in character because it being single largest religion confined to a particular area. This area is called Geographically India and Pakistan. Shintoism is also special in its own way. It is completely confined to Japan only. Then other religions like Jainism can be seen in modern India and Pakistan. And Taoism is fully confined to China only never crossed its boundaries.

Hinduism is the major religion and currently of the people of India as well as considerable number in Pakistan. Even though it is a religion of particular people, it has influenced greater part of Asia. Archaeological findings also affirm the direct and indirect influence of Hinduism outside India, in literature sculpture, architecture, language and religion. It is highly recognized today in India and other parts of the world. Since the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, the question has arisen between the two countries religiously and politically. The government of India is no doubt a secular country. It did not declare Hinduism as a more attractive in the aspect of Indian way of life. It is really interesting to note in this context the dedicated and much feeling sect of people with nationalistic bent of mind and too much particotism toward their religion Hinduism formed a party called "Jan Sangh" or "All India people party". Their motto is to establish one permanent religion called Hinduism. This party strongly advocating nations traditions that India should become a country of one religion Monotheistic (one religion). In such circumstances to-day with the influence of inside and outside Hinduism is undergoing serious consequences.

Regarding the founder of Hinduism there is no authentic information historically or any other source. But it is believed by historians and other scholars that it developed gradually by itself. Since four thousand years. With all the required ethics and other formalities, religiously and culturally. Other religions like Judaism had developed with all believable accounts and it was established by

a person called Prophet Moses. According to some sources. Some other scholars believed that Judaism was founded by the patriarch Abraham leaving aside all the different opinions, it is made clear that Judaism has developed very systematically and continuously with wonderful heritage by Prophet Moses. If at all any founder of any religion is there, it was only a man to be remembered for such great achievements but never a woman. Some of the world's religions have not only a personal founder but also they could have some disciples. The best example is Christ the founder of Christianity has twelve disciples.

They served with Him as long as He lived and continued their service even after His death. They played a prominent role in propagating about Christianity and secured a place in the Christendom. But for Hinduism, there is no such person or disciples to its credit. The Aryans who invaded India in ancient days can hardly fill the bill. The personal founder of any religion enjoys the opportunity by reason of his authority. Yet a complex social system, such as Hinduism had a beginning and this involved people. The "Vedas" for instance are assigned to names. They contained specific reforms to manual phenomena. It is said, Hinduism had a beginning and that has been experienced in a tradition.

Hinduism is a single religion and from another views point it is an amalgamation of many. It combines religions, beliefs and forms all these things we see later. Even though Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism were the children of Hinduism they are treated as separate religions today. It is surprising that some elements of Christianity and Judaism can be found in it. Hinduism is not like a building planned by an architect, but it is like a river making its way from small and distant beginning and never ending in its course. This is a consequence possessed a sense of charity toward all ideas and movements. Hindus have been tolerant toward one another. At the time of partition of India by the British released the murderous antagonism which existed even today between Hindus and Musuim.

As already indicated earlier Hinduism is considered to be the oldest religion of the world. So, its history must be obvious and with complex details. The history of Hinduism does not follow briefly the history of India in the chronological order. It was initially the creation of a society which predates the Aryan invasion of India. According to Archaeological findings that began in 1922 in Punjab, and the Indus valley showed that a highly developed culture was

in existence between 3000 and 2000 BC in ancient cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro. And the pre-historic capital city was Punjab. It was situated on the left bank of the river Ravi and Mohenjodaro means (mount of the dead) on the right bank of the Indus. It was about four hundred miles to the southwest Sind.

These two cities mohenjodara and Harappa were like contemptory settlements of Mesopotamia and Egypt. The excavations contributed considerable support in the Indus valley civilization for a number of historical features of Hinduism. For example, they discovered the remains of a place where ceremonial oblation were performed as they are in Hindu temples today. Water is a symbol of Hinduism for purification which must have had its origin. Some other findings of anthropological survey from the pre Aryan culture was the worship of the mother goddess sitting on a stool in the position of a yogi in meditation. It is nothing but the prototypes of the Indian god siva as the lord of the beasts and symbol of the male and female generative organs. This point of view of the two ancient cities was some how challenged by some scholars. Those authorities were under the impression that they were concerned to Sumerian civilization but not to Indus valley civilization.

Then about 1500 BC some different religions had been introduced into the deserted and ruined cities. At that time, the Aryans otherwise known as Indo-European stock and language who were tall light skinned entered through the passes of the Hindu Kush mountains into India. They found the earthen cities were in ruined condition, which must have been destroyed by the barbarians from the west. The term "Aryans" signifies to the linguistic group like "Semitic". This word also represents a group of people who migrated about 1500BC from the region between Southern Russia and Turkistan. Then a part of that group carried their language "Sanskrit" to the west where they found counter parts in Europe who comprised the "centum" linguistic group including Latin, Greek, Celtic, Teutonic, German and Slavonic languages.

Those Aryans settled in small villages of Punjab with their cattle and letter spread into whole India. They believed themselves that they were of noble birth and decent. They contrasted themselves with the dark skinned people that were already living in that area called Indus valley. So, with that comparison the Aryans called those people "dasa" which later became "slave: in Sanskrit. Then

the word “Dravidian” come into existence which also means “dasa”, gradually the Aryans began to conquer the surrounding places and declared themselves superior and more intelligent.

The importance of religion in that era was noted in three successive stages of literature. The Vedas, the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. Then regarding their gods and goddesses “Indra” is the god of “power” and “varuna” the god of righteousness. Afterwards, a series of supreme deities was acknowledged praja pati or Lord of creation Aditi or infinite, prana or life, kala or time, Rita or cosmic order, remained as the most important deities of that time. The Brahmanas were considered to maintain sacrifice rites. They encouraged ritualized religion. The rituals among defined and elaborated excluding among Brahmanas.

The Upanishads represented contemplation movement in Hinduism which grew up in the parts as a response to the works of priestly and sacrificial period. They laid the foundation for all philosophical thoughts on Hinduism. The Upanishads contributed a number of fundamental concepts to later Hinduism. Such as Brahma (ultimate reality) atman (the self), moksha (deliverance from the chain of finite existence) samsara (world of phenomenal existence) karma (moral laws of causation) and Jnana (saving knowledge). Both gods and sacrifices fall into background with the coming of the Upanishads into Hinduism.

King Darius of Persia occupied the South western part of India where Hinduism was the strongest shortly before 500 BC. Alexander the great invaded Punjab in 326 BC. The Mauryan dynasty was established by Chandragupta around 322 BC. Then emperor Asoka as Buddhist made Buddhism a dominant religion in India. Finally the Mauryan empire came to an end in 185 BC. After that dynasty, northern India was successfully invaded by Greeks, Sakas, Parthians and Kushans. These Kushans were an Iranian tribe and the most popular among them was Kanishka, who lived during second century AD. Then we come across a powerful Sassanian empire in the west. It was called Gupta dynasty in India. Then the period between the fall of Mauryan empire, in 185 BC and the fall of Kushan empire about 300 AD was called traditionally an epic period. This period was specific in Indian history because Hinduism was revived.

Then the great Indian epics called the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavad-Gita were composed and became very powerful and influenced literature. Along with the three great books, three sects of Hinduism also came

into existence. They were vaishnavism, the worship of the god Vishnu or one of his carnations Saivism, the worship of the god Siva, Saktism the worship of the consorts of siva. Due to this radical change, Hinduism spread not only throughout India but also into some Asian countries like, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Malaya and Indo -China. Actually during the period of Guptas, Hinduism impressed a lot. In addition to that, the production of literature like puranas, pias legends about deities and heroes.

It is said even through the efforts of some devoted students the Hinduism blossomed to a golden age, during the reign of Guptas. Then during eighth and fourteenth centuries Indian societies and Hinduism were threatened politically. India was divided between Indian conquering powers and the followers of Islam. Among their rulers who ruled India were Ghazini Mahummad and Mahaammad Bin Tughlak. In course of time, Hinduism began to decline, especially in Northern part of India, but the same Hinduism flourished well in South India. A noted philosopher Sankara charya, was born in a Brahmin family in the North Travencore. He renounced everything in this world. Then as a religious leader, he travelled the whole India and established four monasteries which are in existence even today.

The philosophy of sankaracharya is called “Advaita”. It is completely based on Bhagavad-gita, Upanishads and other traditional scriptures. The Buddhist school of philosophy and system as “Sankya” yoga, Mimanasa, Vedanta were not accepted by sankaracharya. But he stood strongly for the vedic faith which is really orthodox. He was only instrumental in mitigating the influence of repulsive expression of Saivism and Saktism i. in 1526 with the advent of Marshal dynasty and its popular founder was Babar. He was the descendants of both Tamer Lang and Jenghis khan. Among the Moghal rulers the most popular king was Akbar a renowned king. In his time, the Islam achieved its widest geographical coverage. As a great ruler Akbar was successful in uniting different states, races and religions into a relatively harmonious whole. Above all he was a great teacher of universe. He tried his best to bring together all faiths into one religion called “Din – I – llahi”

There are some more philosophers who contributed their might for the modern Hinduism. Among such great men, the first one was Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who founded Brahma Samaj which is based on National Anthem.

Throughout his life, he advocated only Hinduism and remained as a true Hindu. After his death, this Brahma samaj was taken care of by Devendranath Tagore. Then after Raja Ram Mohan Roy, another philosopher came into lime light and his name was Swami Dayananda, who founded “Arya Samaj”. And this samaj taught people the fundamentals of Hinduism. The next popular leader was of course Sri Ramakrishna. His point of view of religion was so universal and he was able to assert that all religions were the glimpse of Devine and in such case a living synthesis is necessary. The life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna were well known in America as well as in Europe through the frequent visits of his faithful disciple Swami Vivekananda with his own intellectual caliber he applied the teachings of Ramakrishna not only to the religious traditions in Hinduism, but also for the social welfare.

With his leadership and influence, Swami Vivekananda established more than hundred centers in the world known as Ramakrishna Mission. In recent times some more leaders cameout from the public and some more leaders came out from the members one was “ Sri Hurobindi Ghosh”. According to him, the principle task of Hinduism was to keep man free from the dragging limitations of human existence. Many people came even from outside of India to be benefited by his teachings and practices. He taught his special type of yoga also.

Rabindranath Tagore, was called one of the greatest poets of modern India. He possessed a strong nationalism and all human explanation. The main source for his views Tagore found in ancient Hinduism. As a great poet, he became very popular with his famous poem “Geethanjali”. He interpreted some of the ancient literature of Hinduism into modern times. Then comes the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi. He was called the greatest modern Hindu. He followed the method of non-violence which was accepted as a virtue among Hindus. Through this means only he brought freedom to India.

BUDDHISM:

Buddhism was the only religion that originated in Indian subcontinent which later became the religion of the world. It is like Christianity and Islam claimed as international religion. It was in existence half a millennium of Jesus Christ and became first international Missionary religion. Buddha himself was an active missionary. The disciples of Buddha were entrusted with two

responsibilities by Buddha himself. Buddhism was unknown and was not permitted and remained distinctive among the universal religions such as Christianity and Islam.

In their history, Christianity and Islam have used forces to convert people into their respective religions. Among the great kings who embraced Buddhism was Emperor Ashoka who ruled India during third century BC. The range of this religion is no doubt enormous. For its development it appears it has taken about twenty four hundred years. It is a complex religion. It includes mysticism, magic, ritual forms of yoga, a detailed psychology and other elements. In China for example, the art of the Tang dynasty frequently described as among the finest in the world. It is believed they belonged to Buddhists.

Buddhism has hundred percent tolerance toward other religions. It is strange to find Hindu duties in the Buddhist ceremonies where these two religions have been in direct contact to each other. The war like spirit is totally discouraged in the religion. The code of conduct of behavior would govern the Samurai known as Bushido and Zen Buddhism.

This religion has found its favour in the past and present among the ruling dynasties of Asian countries and in other countries such as Thailand, Laos, Cambodia etc. Buddhism like Jainism came into being in sixth century BC. Buddha like Mahavira reacted to the principles of Hinduism of his day. He was intensely personal in his religion. Buddha means the enlightened one. According to historical calculations, Buddhism is to-day one of the largest religions in the world. It is said, about 100 to 440 million followers are there as true believers of Buddhism. It is really a most significant force from the countries like china, Japan, Laos, Cambodia, Ceylon, Korea, Nepal and Thailand. From these countries, China has taken the initiative to prepare a rough figure and that figure came up to 150 million. Buddhism is not to-day what it has been in the beginning. So, one must look into the past and then compare it to the present.

FOUNDER OF BUDDHISM:

Buddhism is a title which means “the enlightened one”. This title was conferred on the founder of the religion by those people who recognized his spiritual attainment. He was born in Gautama family. He was given the name Siddhartha. He was an Aryan of Kshatriya caste of the Sakya clan. This clan

inhabited the area bordering on the Himalayas south of Nepal. His father was Suddhodhana. He was the prince of states and wealth. He might be called even as raja of Sakya clan. His mother Maha, a name filled with symbolism gave birth to Buddha in a fertile land called Lumbini gardens near Nepal while the parents were on their journey. It became difficult for scholars to find out the correct dates of birth and death of Buddha. Still they gave the probable dates as 560 and 480 BC. So, in the town of kapilavastu, he was born. It was about one hundred miles from Benares. When Buddha was nineteen years old, he was married to Yashodhara. After he got a son he despised everything and left the royal palace with a firm decision to achieve something in life. He became a monk with five disciples and started his missionary journey. His disciples thought to be perfect in everything. They thought about his mildness and goodness as unchangeable in the whole world. They proclaimed him as the king of universal kings.

According to traditions, he was able to appear and disappear as his will. He performed many miracles. He gave sight to the blind from birth. He cured deaf from the birth. The crippled also received their healing, Throughout history the Buddhist has been disagreeing on one point. It is the point of veneration. It is to be accorded to Buddha. At the time of his death, his disciples became two groups. Some of them venerated him as divine spirit and others not. Actually, there are more statues of Buddha in the world than any other divinity.

The history of Buddha became very complicated. After his death a great council was held at Rajagriha. It was presided over by an aged Kasappa and upali, a prominent disciple repeated the rules of discipline of the order. They called those rules “Vinayakapitaka”. Ananda recited the so called basket of sermons. In addition to all, there is the bible of Buddha also, in Sanskrit. It is known as “Tripitaka”. That book is conveniently divided into three parts as rules, sermons and teachings.

Emperor followed this religion very seriously. He was a man of the people and the people of surrounding areas to accept Buddhism. According to him, it was a great gift. He was so much immersed in that religion, and he himself began to teach publicly about the dharma or teaching of the essential Buddhist way of life. He followed the way of life of Buddha and set an example to others. He built hospitals, dug wells. He constructed a series of stupas in memory of the

life of Buddha. Later he himself dained as a monk, but he could not lead that kind of his kingdom as well as administration Ashoka was not a theologian or philosopher. He was only a strong believer in his missionary movement. But, after the death of Ashoka, Buddhism started its decline in India.

Buddhism began to decline due to some internal problems also, partly because of Muslim invasion. They happened destroy all the monasteries, schools and shrines. They even killed the monks who had the religious Zeal. In addition to the war, Buddhism was already divided into two sects. All these things caused people unable to understand the religion properly. The two sects were - "Theraveda" and "Mahayana". This Theraveda was found primarily in ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Combodia and Loas whereas Mahayana sect had its own influence in China, Tibet and Japan.

The doctrinal differences between the two sects of belief required are discussion Mahayana Buddhism has developed in philosophical system, but Theraveda sect is not concerned with abstract thoughts Mahayana teachings were continued in Sanskrit language where as Theraveda teachings were in "pali" script. The sacred scriptures of this religion are based on the teachings of the Buddha. They are called, "Tripitaka" or three baskets sectarian of the whole. The first one is known as the basket of "Discipline". (Vinayapitaka). The second is called "the basket of Discourses". (Sutrapitaka). The third is the basket of ultimate things (Abidhamma). This Tripitaka is translated into English and it is available in more than a dozan books.

The first tripitaka of the basket of discipline briefly contains the rules and regulatuions for monks and nuns for their good conduct of life. The second pitaka, the basket of discourses is with addresses given by Bddha himself. It is composed of five collections of a variety of topics. The third one is called the scholars documents. It depicts the philosophic basis of existence with its interest centered in the primary value of Nirvana. Mahayana Buddhism was characterized by a number of quite distinctive sects. and these sects would reflect the development of a way different rituals which are philosophical and scriptural. There were hundreds of divisions of lesser important made Buddhism a highly fragmented religion.

The Yogakara school of Mahayana Buddhism was founded by two brother, Asanga and Vasubandha, traders of northwest in about 400 AD. But this disappeared from India in 400 AD though it is still active in countries like china, Japan and Tibet. Many people were attracted by that sect in those three countries. Another form of Mahayana Buddhism was in existence in Tibet. This sect is called “Lamanism” which means the “Superior one”.

The true character of Buddhism is highly diverse. It may be impossible to give a comprehensive description regarding its teaching about God. Actually the original Buddhism and later its school teach that there is no God in the traditional meaning. According to their philosophy Buddhism is nothing but atheism. Buddha did not teach anything about God and had immediate followers continued the same method. As a result of it, they never thought of the doctrine of creation and with that there is no ultimate origin. They understood that there are thirty seven planets in existence. Among them there are four lowest states which are known as the states of unhappiness and above them there are seven happy states in which human beings live. Again there are six planets called lower heavenly beings. Then seventeen planets all based on desire and above them are twenty planets called higher heavenly beings.

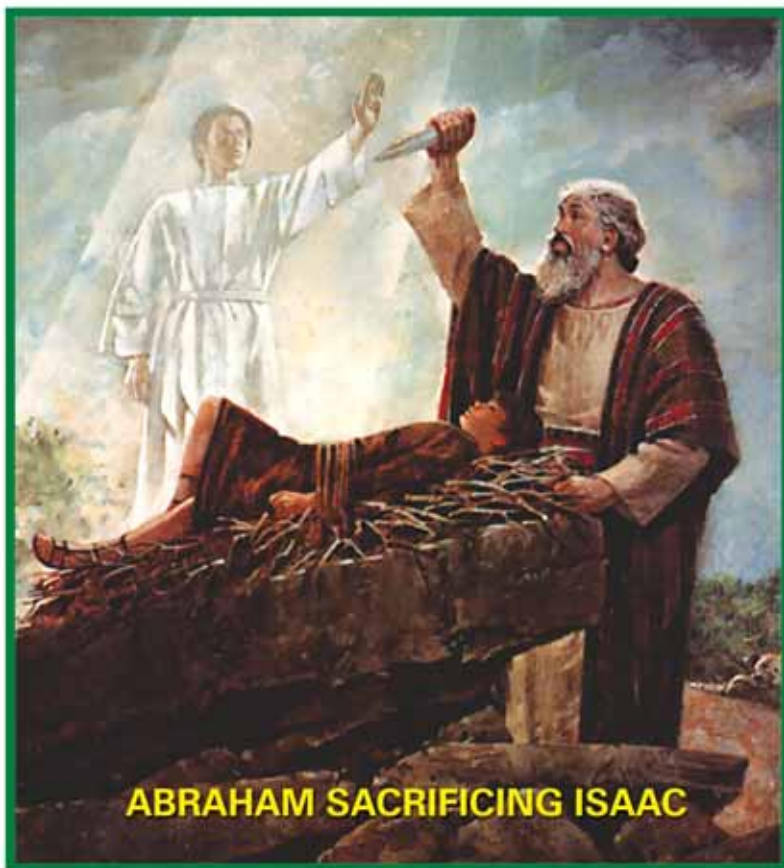
Buddhism also teaches about belief in reincarnation. They say death is not the end of everything. The result of death is immediate rebirth. Their understanding is that, the physical form of body is only the shell of more essential existence. Then according to their teachings Nirvana is not a magation of self. It is a blessed state where in thirst for all kinds of worldly desires would be eliminated in a person. People dispise everything and concentrated more on God. In pali language Nirvana means “No desire”. In sanskrit its meaning is “the blowing out” what is blown out of flame of craving. Nirvana is logically inexpressive concept. The long history of Buddhism is the principle of the wonego (anotta). The doctrine of nouege signifie that the individual ego is a delusion.

Buddhism is purely a religion for individuals. It does not contain systematic teaching, what is necessary to the society. In such ease society does not support individual in his quest for Nirvana. As a matter of fact, Monastie life is considered in Buddhism as superior in position and in the observances. This religion also allows the laymen to be Buddhists with certain code of conduct which contained five important prohibitions. They are:-

- 1) Do not steal.
- 2) Do not kill,
- 3) Do not commit adultery
- 4) Do not tell lies
- 5) Not to drink intoxication.

This religion teaches about individual salvation also. Buddhism protested against castcism in India. Because of that reason Hinduism openly discouraged the spreading of Buddhism specially in India, but got good encouragement in some Asian countries, as there are no casts in those countries.

Another good thing this religions has done was it has encouraged social gatherings or social forms. People clubbed together and forgot their Easticism if at all there is any and social status. They enjoy themselves as Sangha Buddhism never had canonized system of organization. There is also no person in whom the supreme religious authority like the people of Vatican (Pope of Roman Catholic Christianity) but it has developed into a major religion. It has many devotees in Asia. Busshism is no doubt India's contribution to the world.



ABRAHAM SACRIFICING ISAAC



QUMRAN CAVES

EVENTS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER AT END TIMES

A covenant (agreement) between Israelites and Anti-Christ will take place. A man will rise up to political prominence and he may be with Arab Muslim background. According to some sources he is called caliphate. He will be the ultimate seed of Satan as it was foretold in the beginning of the Bible (Genesis 3.15). He will be in control of about ten nations which become his strong basis for power. He will solve the problems of unregenerated world politically, economically and militarily which has sunk deeply in all the matters. So to say, he will be the personification of humanism and proclaim man as the captain of his ship and master of his fate or destiny.

He will appear in a gray flamed suit look sharp, sophisticated and relevant. He is generally known to people as Anti- Christ. This Anti-Christ has other names also in the scriptures as “the progine of Satan”, “the man of sin”, “the son of perdition”, “the little horn”, “Gog”, “the wicked one”, and “the beast”. He is the advisory to Jesus Christ and dead enemy to the purified souls of men and women. After understanding properly the true picture this anti- Christ, if people still try to give their allegiance to that kind of person and to his false kingdom, it is sheer foolishness in their part and such people will be condemned and eternally damned forever. Knowing the fact there will be some people that go in the wrong track and fall into the slough of despond. For that matter we have the example of ungrateful Israelites. By knowing the weakness of Israelites the Anti-Christ will make a covenant with them for seven years. To say more accurately he will confirm or affirm that existing covenant. But there is no proper evidence to indicate that the covenant between Israel and the Anti Christ is already done and the people can recognize the presence of Anti-Christ at the beginning of the seventieth week.

This covenant may not be a sensational one because it is a reaffirmation of 1967 United Nations resolution number 242 as a basis for deciding the continuous conflict between Israel and the neighbouring Arabs who have been like a be in the bonnet. This may be done secretly by clubbing the nations

without proper leader. One thing is clear, that is, seventieth week, when the Anti – Christ keeps his image in the Temple of Mount Moreah and then he will be recognized. This is what God has said (Matthew 24.33). Apostle Paul also reaffirmed this point. If all these things happen in favour of Anti- Christ, then the church will have confrontation with the beast (Anti- Christ) without prior preparation in the middle of the seventieth week.

In this context one thing appears to be true. If the believers of the church are faithful, they will be raptured before the Anti- Christ comes. Let us take it for granted that Israelites have signed seven year covenant with Anti- Christ. Out of it the first Three and Half years will be followed by false Christ's wars, famines and pestilence. (Matthew 24.4-8). The same results are depicted by the white red black and pale horses and the riders of Apocalypse. The four horses and their riders come to the stage of history as the first four seals that are opened.

The wars, famines, pestilence of the second, third and fourth horses along with their riders will influence one fourth of the earth. A large part of the area of the planet the same as the fourth, must be experiencing war, famine and pestilence now itself. That does not mean the seventieth week has already started. As a matter of fact, the effect of the first four seals has been magnified by some prophets and scholars and also teachers. The influence of these four seals will not be the same at all places on the earth. We can also say with confidence that the planet will be in complete chaos. As mentioned in the scripture some unexpected events will have to take place at the time of the middle of the seventieth week.

War will take place, in heaven. Then Michael one of the seven arch angels will fight with Satan with the support of faithful angels. Of course Satan has support from fallen angels. The result of the war is that Satan with his followers is cast out of heaven. It is said, as Lucifer with the present name Satan, when he is punished out of heaven, one third of the angel population followed him. Then the stay of Satan on the earth has become another problem since he is always a trouble maker. His presence is a big problem to women particularly, because a woman (a virgin) has to give birth to a seed of David, who will curb and punish this evil incarnate (Satan). And this is no other than Jesus Christ who will crush

the head of that Satan and through him into the bottomless pit. The arch angel Michael got a wonderful victory over the fallen angels. But this time he will cease his work of hindering ("he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2.7)

Satan by remaining on earth will have full control over his followers (or seed) the Anti- Christ for forty two weeks or the second 3.5years of Daniel's seventieth week.

The Anti-Christ will keep his image in a hastily constructed Temple by the Jews on the Mount Moriah. The main purpose of this house is to continue their animal sacrifices. Why the Anti- Christ wants to keep his image in the temple is to draw the attention of Jews and finally merge that Jewish nation into his political kingdom. This incident will begin with the opening of the fifth seal, and this also indicates the time of Great Tribulation. And, God calls this putting of the image of the Anti – Christ in the Temple as infamous action "the abomination of desolation". Most of the ungrateful non-believers among Israelites will certainly embrace the Anti- Christ. They may consider him as their political saviour from their long horror and suffering history of wars, terrorism and uncertainty of life.

But religious Jews and Christians will refuse the covenant with anti- Christ and also his mark. In such circumstances, some of them may become martyrs in his hands and others flee to the wilderness. At that time the forces of Anti-Christ will pursue them but God will protect all His people. Then he will declare war against the remaining Israelites and the seed who, keeps the commandments of God, and the Testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12.17). This is the real starting of persecution of the true believers throughout the world.

The result of persecution will be the best separation of believers and non-believers or people who change their faith according to the situation. This kind of people can never experience the gift of salvation and the fruits of redemption of Jesus Christ. They think about their safety only lose their faith in God and in course of time it will fade away from their hearts forever.

Believers can recognize the Anti- Christ only in the middle of seventieth week when he keeps his own image in the Temple of God, with that they can understand the coming of the Messiah is at hand. So, when the fifth seal is

opened, it indicates the time of “Great Tribulation” and also the second coming of Jesus Christ is very close. The only point the believers cannot understand is the exact hour or the day of His coming. The unsaved with the mark of Anti-Christ will know the terrible events and the wrath of God after His coming. The situation will be as horrible as it was at the time of Noah’s flood. People were enjoying everything without anticipating any untoward incident then flood came and all faced miserable death. Same is the case with the non-believers at this time. Yet they show their deaf ear to the warning of the Lord.

Then exactly at the middle of the seventieth week two men will appear all of sudden in Jerusalem. God calls them “my two witnesses”(Revelation 11.3). They are identified with Biblical references as Prophet Moses and prophet “Elijah” who were the Old Testament personalities. Moses represent law where as Elijah represent prophets. These two persons will be raised to witness about Jesus Christ. Their ministry would continue for forty two months or 3 1/2 years, the same period of time which the Satan also gives to the Anti- Christ. The effects of fifth seal and Great Tribulations are the cosmic disturbance will take place in heaven and earth. The lord explained this calamity in the following lines - “Immediately after the Tribulation of those days, shall the Sun be darkened and the Moon shall not give her light and Stars fall from the heaven the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 22.29-30).

In this regard a minor prophet Joel also gave a wonderful statement about this calamity through his prophecy. He said, “The earth shall quake before them, the heavens shall tremble, the Sun and the Moon shall be dark for the Day of the Lord is great and very terrible and who can abide it” (Joel 10.11). And Apostle John who penned the great book of Revelation added his testimony to this topic, which is a part of his dream. He said, “And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal Lo, there was a great earth quake, and the Sun became black as sack cloth of hair and the Moon became as blood And the heaven appeared as a scroll when it is rolled together and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (Revelation 6.12 - 14). In such critical conditions the son of man appears in heaven, then all tribes of the earth mourn and they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with the power and great glory.

Prior to the rapture of the church God will seal immediately for the protection of 1, 44,000 Jews. This number of Jews comprises of 12,000 from each tribe of twelve sons of Jacob (Israel). These people live through the “Day of the Lord” because God will not live Himself without a witness from among men and women. So, after the cosmic disturbance and sealing of 1, 44,000 Jews the church will be raptured. The church is seen by John in Revelation 7.9 in his dream as a great multitude in heaven. They were standing obediently before God according to the order of priority. They were clothed with white robes, which indicate purity. Those twelve tribes were also holding psalms in their hands which is a symbol of victory.

Then the wrath of God is about to be poured on the Day of the Lord. At this juncture there is some difference of opinion from apostles like Paul who preached in the church that “Jesus had delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonian 1.10). And also church is not an obligatory to the wrath of God. Even then church will not be free from the shortened Great Tribulation and persecution by Anti-Christ before the rapture.

The phrase “the Day of the Lord” is no doubt a well noted term in the Bible. It is used by scholars whenever they talk about “end times”. It is mentioned with the details by eight Old Testament prophets and three New Testament writers. They speak about the Day of the Lord is nothing but, the final out-pouring of God’s wrath on a wicked and unregenerated world which has bluntly rejected the grace of God Almighty. The trumpets and bowls of the book of Revelation comprise the total description of that time with all types of calamities. As mentioned in the scripture the Lord will come down to the earth at the end of the seventieth week of prophet Daniel with the blowing of the seventh trumpet. When He comes to the earth, those who have been resurrected or raptured will follow Him. At that time as apostle John said, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of Jesus Christ and he shall reign forever and ever”.

It is also said in about thirty days after the return of Jesus Christ to the earth, the bowls will pour out the wrath of God, upon the nations. As a result, there will be devastation and destruction and rapid judgment. At the time people are compared to sheep and goats. Then through the judgment the sheep (the believers) and goats (the non-believers) will be separated. Basing on the verdict

the goats will be thrown into the Hell whereas the sheep will enter the Millennial kingdom, which is also called the new heaven and New earth. Those who are still in mortal bodies with the ability of producing children and those who are in immortal bodies, who have been already resurrected or raptured at the coming of Jesus will be now living in New Jerusalem, a chandelier city which is let down by God from heaven.

Technically speaking this period is called the “Millennium “ the first phase of the eternal state with the inception of this eternal state, the Anti- Christ and false prophets “will be caste in to a lake of fire”, or fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19.20) and finally Satan the master brain behind all evil things, will be bounded with fetters for a thousand years (Revelation 20.22). After one thousand years of severe punishment Satan will be let for a short time. But he will continue to deceive nations with his evil actions. And this time, those who still follow Satan and rebel against God, will be consumed by fire. Regarding Satan he will be thrown into the “Lake of fire” to be tormented day and night forever and ever”. (Revelation 20.10)

Then all unbelievers of ages will stand before God at the “Great white throne judgment”. It must be a sacred scene. Men and women of all stages of life, will have their day of judgment in the court. The judgment must have been based on their way of life in this material world, whether they have done anything good to other to please God. The Judgment on these people whose names are not written in the “book of life” will be very harsh.

It is written about such people, “And whoever was not found written in the book of life was east into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20.15).The eternal state will come into existence after completing this event. This eternal state will begin technically, with the beginning of the Millennium with the new heaven and new earth and New Jerusalem will continue undisturbed for all eternity. So, the residents of the Millennial kingdom are redeemed men and women in perfect glorious union. And all the credit and praise will go to the maker and saviour the Lord Jesus Christ.

HOW THAT MILLENNIUM WOULD BE?

The word “millennial”, according to the Bible reference, is a period of 1,000 years. There are many pages from the Old Testament that spoke about

the promises made by God regarding this Millennial Kingdom to Israel who were chosen people from the seed of Abraham, the father of righteousness. God reminded them time and again that they would thrive and live in perfect peace and happiness with faith in God. Prophet Isaiah said, “it shall happen the mountain of the Lord, be established at the top of the mountains. Then all nations and many people would say, ‘Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, the house of the Lord, so that He will teach us how to walk in His path. When the law and the word of God go out from Jerusalem, then the Lord will judge the nations. God will rebuke many people, and they shall use their swords as ploughshares and the spears as pruning hooks, No nation shall raise the sword against another, and there shall be no more wars.

The above said passage of Prophet Isaiah and his book on the whole, leads people toward the Millennial Kingdom, which is going to be established by Jesus Christ after His second coming, because people have been taught about the dangers and consequences of war, and the advantages of God’s kingdom. The promise of Israel has not yet been fulfilled because It is referred to future Millennial Kingdom. For all the radical changes among Israelites, need to study theology and attend churches regularly so that they would be in a position to understand how that Millennial Kingdom would be through the preaching In churches. Then, regarding that kingdom, Prophet Isaiah said, “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed their young ones, shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw, like the ox. And the nourishing child play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the vipers den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the Earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:6-9).

The above quoted passage clearly tells us about the wonderful and peaceful Millennial Kingdom of God, especially regarding how the wild and mild animals live together in that great kingdom. This example clearly gives us the true picture of peace and tranquility in that kingdom. This new kingdom shall be established and ruled by Jesus Christ after His second coming as the lion of the tribe of Judah. As described already, the life in that Millennial Kingdom shall be like that of the life in the Garden of Eden before “sin” entered and polluted the

entire atmosphere. Keeping in view the peaceful life in the Garden of Eden, God wants to create a new universe with the same congenial atmosphere.

Apostle Paul also tells us that the whole creation is longing for such a time (Romans 8.22). Many events are mentioned in the book of Isaiah about the Millennial Kingdom, and the would-be king, Jesus Christ, and also how the life is going to be there. Let us see what is said in the New Testament about the Millennial Kingdom. In the gospel of Luke 1: 32, the angel Gabriel came to young virgin Mary, who was in utter confusion, and said about the birth of Jesus Christ, "He shall be great and shall be called the son of the highest, and the Lord God give unto him the throne of his father David. "This brief reference is about Mary, her son Jesus, and His future destiny. The angel Gabriel also promised Mary that Jesus would become the king of Jews, the rightful person as the descendant of David. In Matthew 16:28, Jesus says, "Verily I say unto you, there will be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the son of man coming in His kingdom." We can remember how Jesus was transfigured before His three disciples, and showed Himself how He would be when He returns to His new kingdom to rule for a thousand years.

We can recollect also what Jesus said to His disciples, Peter, James, and John before whom He was transfigured that thy kingdom was anything but literal. He knew the Jewish people were expecting a literal kingdom, and Jesus speaks very briefly in the following passage. In the gospel of Matthew 19:28, Jesus tells His disciples, "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' also shall sit upon 12 thrones, judging upon the 12 tribes of Israel." Here, Jesus was speaking about the real throne of His own, and twelve thrones of His disciples, and twelve tribes of Israel. The thief on the cross asked Jesus to remember him when he comes to His kingdom. If death is inevitable, we shall not give any importance to the words of the thief. He must have spoken about the literary kingdom where one can have the citizenship only through redemption.

Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:24, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." These words rule, authority, and power are literal and reflect the reign of Jesus Christ during a 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom of God, His father. Whenever Jesus entered into a discussion

of a kingdom, or responding anyone regarding the kingdom. He would have always had the real kingdom in His mind. All of us know, according to the Bible, that Jesus was the true descendant of the real Jewish people, who was returning as the lion of the tribe of Judah to a real world, to real people, living in a real geographical region, to rightfully climb the real throne of Israel and of this world.

HISTORY BEHIND

According to historical background, man's quest for peace will take him to the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem and in Hebrew it is called Yerushalayim the Jerusalem "house of peace". It is a 36-acre plateau, and that place is called Mount Zion, one of the mountain ranges of Mount Moriah. It is just north of Mount Sinai desert along the ancient patriarchal highway, and it is between Egypt and Assyria. In future as it is happening in other places, we may speculate a division of both the city of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. They may be divided with a wall as east and west. The Dome of the Rock and the Mosque (ALAQSA) will remain for Muslims as their places of worship. Then on the other side of the wall, a modest temple already designed by the temple authorities. There shall be an altar for animal sacrifices, which was stopped by the Roman rulers about 1,900 years ago.

According to prophecy, we are very close to the end of the age and also we're very close to the introduction of the Anti-Christ. There is no doubt the curtains will go up, and the four horsemen of the apocalypse will gallop on the stage of human history. It is the real life, and God said through Zechariah, "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all people round about when they shall be in the seize both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces though all the people of the earth, be gathered together against it" (Zechariah 12:2-3).

Above all these things and for the present Information, Jesus Christ is the central figure to talk about. With faith in Him and obedience to His commands, people can face any kind of difficulties that take place in the Holy City. Some destructive things will occur in the world 'till Jesus Christ comes for the second time with healing spirit as the son of righteousness. Until then, Israelites will be in search of shalom (peace). For the fulfillment of prophecy, Israelites will be

victorious at the end of times through their Messiah, and some events have to take place in the meantime. A caliphate will arise and call all Islamic nations to join together. He will possess religious as well as political powers, and give suggestions to Middle East confrontation. This caliphate is also called Anti-Christ who will enter covenant with the Israelites, and it is called in the Bible, “a covenant with death, and with hell” (Isaiah 28:15).

Why should many Israelites make a covenant with Arabs and Muslims, even though their population is very small compared with Muslims and Arabs? At the same time, Muslims were afraid of minority Israelites for their superiority in military and nuclear capability. The Arab Muslims realized the fact that if they go to war against Israelites, they will be devastated with heavy loss. Along with Muslims, Israelites would also experience too much loss. Apart from that, Israelites happened to indulge in many wars for 65 years and completely exhausted. So, at this stage, they have been longing for permanent peace only, but not wars. It is said in the prophecy that the Anti-Christ will plant Tabernacles of his palace between the seas (the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea), and in the glorious holy mountains in Jerusalem. Then, he will stop the reestablishment of the sacrificial system, and keep the image of his god in the temple and put a mark of his god. This is also referred to in the Bible as the “time of Jacob’s troubles,” or “Israel’s darkest hour,” or God calls it, “Great Tribulation period”. Then all the nations will join together and persecute Israel. At that critical situation, God will come and fight for His people. Then, naturally, God will win the battle and permit His people to live happily and peacefully in Jerusalem (Israel). So let us wait for that precious time and pray for everlasting peace in that holy city Yerushalayim.

SOME BIBLICAL REFERENCES

A

Abraham :- It is a rugged mountain range in the East of the river Jordan in Moab. And from that place only Moses happened to see the promised land before his death.

Abba :- It is an Aramaic word, which means “Father”. This word was used by Jesus Christ, while He was praying at the garden of Gethsemane (mark 14.32). This word is also used by Apostle Paul to express the relationship between Christians and God as sons and Father.

Abigail :- She was the wife of Nobad. After his death she became the wife of king David. Nobad refused the servants of David also when he was alive (1 samuel 25.36).

Abiram :- He rebelled against Moses in the wilderness and miserably died in the earth quake(Numbers 16.1-35).

Abishag :- A young woman, who served as the nurse of David in his old age. After his death his son Adonijah tried to marry her, but he was killed by king Solomon (1 kings 2.13-25).

Abishai :- He was a deputy commander in the army of David. He was very loyal to the king at the time of Absalom’s rebellion. He also saved the life of David by killing a giant. (2 Samuel 21.16-17).

Abomination :- Something repulsive to Hebrews like heathen idolatry blemished animal sacrifice sexual transgression, child sacrifice, practice of witchcraft magic and spiritism. All those things are repulsive even to God.

Abomination of desolation :- The hateful action of Antiochus Epiphanes in sacrificing pigs in the Jewish Temple, in about 165 BC. This discipised act of the Syrian ruler is considered the fulfilment of Daniel’s prophecy. (Daniel 9.24-27)

Achaicus :- Name of a Christian who visited Apostle Paul from the city of Corinth.

Achish :- A philistine king of Gath who provided refuge to David when he fled from king Saul. (1 Samuel 21.10-15)

Adar :- Twelfth month of Jewish calendar called Lunar calendar. In our calendar this month comes in February and March.

Adonal :- The Hebrew name for God, translated as Lord, God. (Ezekiel 11.8)

Agape :- A Greek word for selfless love. This love is the most enduring of Christian virtues.

Amen :- A Solemn word used for approval. Jesus is called the Amen, which means He is true and reliable. (Revelation 3.14)

Ananias :- He was an early believer in Jerusalem. He was struck dead for lying and withholding money he had pledged for the church's common treasury. (Acts 5.1-11)

Apocrypha :- A group of books written between 156 BC and 70 AD and included in the Bibles of some religious groups. But they were rejected by the Bible authorities.

Apocalypse :- A Greek word translated as revelation. It refers to the unveiling of the hidden things which are known to God only.

Apollos :- He was a Jewish believer from Alexandria in Egypt. He worked with the church of Ephesus after it was founded by Apostle Paul. He was a learned man and good speaker. He was the disciple of John the Baptist.

Apostasy :- A falling away from truth or renunciation of one's faith in Christ (Hebrew 3.12) Apostasy is caused by Satan and influenced by false teachers. Apostasy will never occur if the believers are stronger in their faith and depend upon God.

Ariel :- It is a Symbolic name for the city of Jerusalem which means "lion of God".

Ashima:- A false god worshipped by foreign colonists who settled in Samaria after the Northern kingdom of Israel was defeated by Assyrians in 722 BC.

Atheism:- Denial of God's existence. This attitude was illustrated by the Egyptian pharaoh's refusal to release the Hebrew slaves. The psalmist declared that disbelief

in God is a characteristic of the foolish. God clearly revealed His nature and intention of man leaves unbelievers without excuse

Atonement :- Reconciliation of God and men through sacrifice as a symbol of repentance of people. But the real reconciliation was made possible only through atoning death of Christ on the cross and His resurrection. The righteousness of God is imparted through Christ's sacrifice. His atonement was foundation for peace among men.

Atonement Day :- It is Jewish holy day also called "Yon Kippur". On that day atonement was made for all Israelites. (Leviticus 18.29-30) The Jewish high priest would make his first atonement for himself and then for the sins of people by sprinkling the blood of a sacrificed animal on the altar. But Jesus Christ made a permanent sacrifice for the sake of the sinners of the world.

B

Baal:- He was a chief Canaanite god. (Judges 2.13) He was the god of rain, and provider of fertility for crop and livestock. His worship was considered as immorality and offense to the God of Israelites. For sometime, the Hebrews also worshipped this god and committed idolatry. Prophet Elijah denounced the prophets of Baal and the God of Israel won a wonderful victory over the pagan god on the mount of Carmel.

Beatitudes:- Pronouncements of blessings at the beginning of the Sermon on the mount by Jesus Christ. God's special reward is promised to those who recognize their spiritual need as those who mourn, those who are humble, those who are obedient, who are merciful, who are pure in heart, who practice peace making and those who are persecuted for Jesus sake. All those blessings are from the 5th chapter of Matthews.

Beautiful Gate:- A Gate which serves as one of the main Gates, into the Temple area in Jerusalem, in the New Testament times. (Acts 3.2)

Begotten:- A word which describes Christ as the only (begotten son) and unique son of His heavenly Father.

Ben-Ammi:- It was the name of Lot's son by his younger daughter born in a cave near Zoar. Later he was called the ancestor of Ammonites.

Bethabara:- It is a place on the river Jordan where John the Baptist baptized the believers. It is said Jesus Christ was also baptized at the same place.

Bible:- God's written record of His revelation which is accepted by Christians as uniquely inspired and authoritative for faith and practice. The books of the O.T chronicles speak about the expectations of the Messiah and the books of the N.T reveal the fulfilment of God's redemptive purpose through Jesus Christ and the church. The Bible was written with the inspiration of God in about 1500 years starting with Moses till the end of 1st century AD. The O.T was originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic languages whereas the N.T was written in Greek language. All the copies of the scripture were written with hand until the invention of printing press in fifteenth century. The "Geneva" Bible published in 1560 was the first English Bible translated from original languages. Then came the popular King James version in 1611 AD.

Blasphemy:- The act of showing contempt toward God. This was considered capital offense by Jewish people and the punishment would be even death. Jesus was accused of blasphemy by Jewish leaders. They called Him only a man, but He claimed to be the Son of God.

Book of life:- A record of God with the names of served ones. This book will be used as a basis for God's final judgement.

Book of the Law:- This term is used for the book of the law or Torah. The five books of Moses are called "Pentateuch".

Booth:- A temporary shelter made of tree branches. The feast of Tabernacle is also called the feast of Booths. Israelites lived in such shelter as a reminder of their harsh life, they experienced in the wilderness, after they were liberated from the slavery for about 430 years in Egypt.

C

Calvary:- (The Skull) It is a hill just outside the city walls of Jerusalem, where Jesus Christ was crucified (Luke 23.33). The word "Calvary" comes from "Latin" language which means "Skul". So it means place of skull. The Aramaic form of this word is "Golgotha".

Centurion:- A Roman Military officer, who would command one hundred soldiers (Acts 10.1-20)

Charity:- It is an old English word for “love”.

Circumcision:- Removal of foreskin of male sex organ. A virtual (function) would also take place at that time. Generally on the eighth day after the birth of a male child (Exodus 12.44) It was started with Abraham which signified a covenant between God and His people the Hebrews.

Cyrus:- He was the founder king of Persian Empire. He defeated Babylonians and reigned between 559-530 BC. After the war, he allowed the captives to return to their native land in 536.

D

Darius:- It is a title for the kings of Persia. Four different kings, with this title are mentioned in the Old Testament.

Dathan:- He was a rebellious leader against Moses in the wilderness. All those rebellion men were destroyed by an earth quake. (Numbers 16.1-35)

Daughter of Zion:- A symbolic expression for the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

Decalogue:- It is another name for the ten commandments.

Diana:- It is a Roman name for the heathen goddess of hunting and virginity. Ephesus was the most important center for the worship Diana, where Apostle Paul happened to preach, which caused uproar among the craftsmen who earned their living by making the images of her (Acts 19.24-25)

Dinah:- The only daughter of Jacob who was assaulted by shechem, who was the son of the king of Shechem.

Denites:- An Assyrian tribe which populated Samaria after the Northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians.

Doxlogy:- A brief hymn or declaration which proclaims God's power and glory. (1 Chronicles 29.11)

Dragon:- A mystical sea creature or a winged lizard. This name is applied to Satan, and to the Anti – Christ. (Revelation 12.3 and 12.9)

E

Ebenazer:- Site of Israel's defeat by the philistines. After some years Samuel erected an altar in that place and called it "Ebenazer" which means "the stone of help".

Eber:- It was the name of the great grandson of Shem. Shem was the first son of Noah. And Abraham must be the descendant of this Eber.

Edification:- The process of which believers grow in holiness, wisdom and righteousness. (1 Corinthians 14.3)

Edom:- This name was given to Esau after his birth right was taken away by his brother, Jacob. The descendants of Esau were called Edomites, who became dead enemies to Israelites.

Enoch:- The first born son of Cain and city was built by Cain in the name of Enoch. He lived for 365 years. He did not see death, but directly taken to heaven by God. His son was Methuselah, who lived for 969 years, the longest lived accordingly to the Bible.

Euphrates:- A major river in the territory of ancient Babylonians and Persians in Mesopotamia. It is also mentioned as one of the rivers in the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 2.14)

Evangelist:- A person who goes from place to place by preaching the Gospel. Philip one of the disciples was called Evangelist; rather Zealous

Evangelist of the early churches. (Acts 21.18)

EWV Lamb:- A female sheep (Genesis 21.30)

Ezekiel:- He was a prophet of Judah. He was taken as a captive by Babylonians. He prophesied faithfully for his countrymen for more than twenty years. He was the author of the book of Ezekiel in the OT.

EZRA:- He was a scribe and a priest, who led an important reform movement among the Jewish people after the Babylonian exile. He was the author of the book of EZRA. His book dealt with the history of the exiled Jewish people and then safe return after seventy years of punishment. After rebuilding of the Temple (called Second Temple) the Jewish people followed the law of God under the

leadership of EZRA. They even left their foreign wives. They confessed their sins and renewed their covenant with God.

F

Faith:- It means belief and confidence in the testimony of another particularly in the promise of God regarding salvation and eternal life for all those who put their trust in Jesus Christ.

Fish Gate:- It is the name of one of the Gates in the wall of Jerusalem. It was called so because fish from the sea of Mesopotamia used to be brought from this Gate only.

G

Gaza/Azzah:- It is the name of a philistine city where Samson was killed after he destroyed the temple of their god Dagon. (Judges 16.27-30)

Gibiah/Gibeath:- A native city of King Saul and capital of his kingdom. The same city was destroyed by Israelites during the time of Judges.

Gilgal:- It is the name of a site between Jordan river and Jerico city, where the Hebrews erected memorial stones to commemorate God's faithfulness in leading them into the promised land (Joshua 4.19-20) was also headquarters to Joshua to campaign against the Canaanites. And also Saul was crowned as the first king of Israelites from the same place.

Gleaming:- Gathering of grain left behind by the reapers. In ancient times it was the custom and courtesy to leave something to the needy. Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz. (Ruth 22.23)

Godliness:- Holy living and righteous behaviour which comes from devotion to God. Godliness also leads one to love others.

Gog prince of Magog:- He was the leader of a tribal people, who were enemies to Israelites. Gog was condemned by Ezekiel. In the book of Revelation Gog and Magog represent the forces of evil which oppose God and His people. (Revelation 20.8)

H

Halah:- It is a region in Assyria to which the captives of Northern kingdom were taken. (2 Kings 17.6)

Ham:- The second son of Noah. His four sons became ancestors of many nations.

Canaan:- His descendants become canaanites. Cush and Phut Their descendants were, Africans and Ethiopians

Mizraim:- His descendants were Egyptians. (Genesis 10.6)

Hanani:- He was the brother of Nehemiah, who became the Governor of Jerusalem. It was he who brought the news of suffering of (News of) the citizen of Jerusalem to his brother.

Heave offering:- An offering consisted of first fruits of the harvest and tenth of all liths. It would be presented to God, before it was given to the priests. It was also known as peace offering.

Heaven:- it is used for the atmosphere or the sky or the place where God dwells or the future home of all believers, who will dwell with God eternally.

Heavenly city:- The future city that would be built by God as a dwelling place for those who belong to Him. It would be known as New Jerusalem the place where God dwells eternally among the redeemed.

Hebron/KirjathArba:- It is an ancient city in Canaan, where Abraham lived and where Sarah died. After the conquest of Canaan, it was designed as one of the cities of Rafuges.

Hellenistic:- Greek speaking Jews were called so.

Hemlock / Wormwood:- A bitter and poisonous plant.

Hephze-bah:- It is a symbolic name, which means “My delight is in her”, which would be used for Jerusalem after its restoration to God’s grace and favour.

Holy of Holies:- (Holy place) The sacred innermost sanctuary of the Temple and Tabernacle containing the Ark of the covenant and the mercy seat. It is said only the high priest would enter into it one day in a year, which is called the Day of atonement; On that day the high priest would make special sacrifice for the sins of the people. (Hebrew 9.2-3)

Holy ghost:- It is an old English Phrase used for the holy spirit.

Hosanna:- It was a triumph shout by the crowd when Jesus entered Jerusalem a few days before He was crucified. The meaning of Hosanna is “Save us now”.

I

I am:- The name by which God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush. This expression shows his eternity, self-existence and unsearchableness. (Exodus 3.14)

Intercession:- prayer offered on behalf half of others Christ made intercession for those who were crucifying Him, and for His disciples. The elders of the early churches were instructed to pray for the sick. Paul prayed for Israelites to be saved.

J

Jacob's well:- The well was dug by Jacob. At that place only Jesus offered "living water" to Samaritan woman. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament. To-day this site is associated with the ancient city of Shechem; near the highway between Jerusalem and Galilee.

Jedidiah:- It was a name given to Solomon. It means "beloved of Jehovah". It was bestowed upon him by prophet Nathan at the time of his birth. This name suggests that the sin of adultery of David had been forgotten.

Jezebel:- The Scheming wife of king Ahab, who promoted Baal worship in the nation of Israel. She led Ahab to build pagan altars and killed many prophets of the Lord plotted the death of prophet Elijah who prophesied her death when king Jehu came to power, according to the prophecy of Elijah both Ahab and Jezebel were assassinated.

Jezreel:- A symbolic name given by prophet Hosea to his son to show that Jehu and his family should be punished for murdering Ahab family. The name "Jezreel" means God scatters or "God Sows". (Hosea 1.3-5)

Joanna:- She was a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. She prepared spices for His burial and proclaimed His resurrection. (Luke 24.1-10)

Jochebed:- She was the mother of Moses. Aaron, and Miriam. She was treated as one of the heroes of Faith (Hebrew 11.23)

Judaizers:- An early Christian set that advocated for the circumcision of the Gentiles before they become Christians. (Acts 15.1) They were opposed by Paul who insisted that believers are justified by faith alone. These Judaizers were also opposed by peter and James at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15.8-19)

K

Kenizzetes:- A Canaanite tribe whose land was promised to Abraham's descendants. (Genesis 15.10-19)

Kenoses:- This word is related to the dual nature of Jesus Christ. "The divinity and humanity". This theory claims and advocates that God's son set aside or "emptied Himself" of certain divine attributes. When He became human. My scholars rejected the theory that Jesus gave up any divine attributes but it refers to Christ's voluntary servant hood. (John 17.5).

Kings Garden:- A royal garden in the city of Jerusalem. (2 Kings 25.4)

L

Lake of Fire:- The place of final punishment which is filled with burning brimstone (Revelation 19.20). This place is described as the second death. The people consigned to the Lake of Fire are Satan, persons not written in the book of life and unbelieving sinners.

Lo-amnic:- It is a symbolic name which means "not my people". It is given by Hosea to his second son to signify God's rejection of rebellions Israelites. (Hosea 1.8-9)

Logos:- It is a Greek term which means both "the word" and "reason". Jesus came into this world as the "Logos" or the word of God incarnated in the human form. (John 1.3)

Lord's supper:- The final meal of Jesus Christ with His disciples which He observed as a Passover ritual, as a symbol to His approaching death (Luke 22.15-16). In this act He established a memorial supper symbolizing His broken body and shed blood. This has to be observed by Christian and enjoy till the Lord returns. (1 Corinthians 1.1-26)

Loving kindness:- God's gentle and steadfast love and mercy which He extends freely to His people.

M

Maccabees:- It is a family of Jewish patriots who headed a religious revolt against Syrians in Palestine from 167 to 63 B.C.

Mura:- It means “bitter”. This name was given by Naomi that it expressed her sorrow over the death of her husband and sons. (Ruth 1.3-21)

Maranatha:- It is an Aramaic word which means “come O Lord”. It expresses hope the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Mediator, the Christ:- This title describes His reconciling us to God. His sacrificial death has made it possible for us to have peace with God and with each other. As our mediator He has made a full and final sacrifice for our salvation.

Monogamy:- Marriage of a man with one woman only. This pattern was established by God in the Garden of Eden. But we have many people in the Bible with more than one wife like Jacob, David, Solomon etc. This pattern is called polygamy.

Monotheism:- The belief in one-the only supreme God. It is in contrast to polytheism which means more than one god like heathens.

Morning Star:- The planet “venus” as it appears at dawn and also a figurative title for Christ. Christ is described as morning star which outshines the light of prophetic witness.

Most High:- A name for God Signifying His majesty (Acts 48-49). This title was used by non – believers both in OT and NT also I am Jehovah; Yahuwah.

N

Naaman:- He was a captain in the Syrian army. He was healed for his leprosy by prophet Elisha, after taking seven dips in the river Jordan

Naaman praised much the God of Israel. Jesus also mentioned his name. (Luke 4.27)

Nebo:- The highest point of mount Pisgah in Moab near Jericho, where Moses died after viewing the promised land and also he was buried there. He was the Babylonian God of science and knowledge, Mount Nebo was possibly a center of Nebo worship prophet Isaiah declared the vanity of such idols. (Isaiah 46.1)

New covenant:- God’s final covenant with His people by which His grace is expressed to all believers. According to prophet Jeremiah, the new covenant was symbolized by Jesus at the passover meal with His disciples. He called the cup

the “new covenant in my blood”. (Luke 22.20) Christ the mediator of a new and bitter covenant assumes our eternal inheritance.

Nineveh:- It was a capital city of Assyria on the Tigris river, where prophet Jonah preached God’s message of Judgement. It was founded by “Ashur” son of Shem. Nineveh reached its heights of wealth and splendour at the time of Jonah. It was taken by the Medes in 750 BC and destroyed by them. The same Medes took Babylonia also in about 606 BC.

Nisroeh:- An Assyrian god with a temple at Nineveh where king Semmacherib was killed about 698 BC. It was believed that this god has human body, with eagle’s head. (2 Kings 19.36-37)

O

Oded:- A prophet of Samaria who urged kindness toward the captives from Judah. His intervention led to the release of captives who were taken to Jericho.

Olive Mount:- A hill at the eastern part of Jerusalem; where Jesus was betrayed by Judas on the night before His crucifixion. The olive branches from that mount were used to make booths for the feast of Tabernacle.

Omri:- He was the king of Israelites who built Samaria as the Capital for the Northern kingdom. He reigned about 885- 875 BC. He was a wicked king who led the nation into idolatry. Omri was the father of another wicked king Ahab who succeeded him. And the ruthless Queen Athaliah was the granddaughter of Omri and daughter of Ahab. (2 King 11.1-3)

Ordinances:- Baptism, and the Lord’s supper rituals are procedures intended to commemorate the great events of redemption. The Lord’s supper is the remembrance of the shed blood and broken body of Christ. Baptism symbolizes death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, and the believers victory over sin and death. (Romans 6.3-6)

P

Palestine/Palestina:- It was the territory of the Canaanites, which later became the land of the people of Israel. The name Palestine is originally referred to the Philistines territory, particularly the area of the present Carmel. But during the Christian era the name is extended to all the holy land including the sides of the river Jordan, the Dead sea region and south to Egypt. After the Canaanites

left the area, it was called the land of Israel and finally became the land of promise to the descendants of Abraham. Its great importance was three world religions were originated here. They are – Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Pantheism:- It is a doctrine which teaches that God and His universe are identical or that physical things are merely attributes of an all encompassing God. Jews and Christians reject this doctrine because God created the universe separately apart from Himself. (Genesis 1.1) He exists separately apart from the world.

Patmos:- It was a desolate Island in the Aegean Sea. It was used as a prison by the Romans and John was sent to that place or exiled where he wrote “the book of Revelation” Christ revealed Himself to John and told him to send messages to the Seven churches of Asia Minor (Revelation 19.19)

Patriarch:- It means “Head of a tribe” or clan in the OT times, who ruled by authority passed from father to the oldest son. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob along with the sons of Jacob and David were notable examples of patriarchal rule. (Acts 2.29, 7.8-9)

Principality:- There are about 10 groups among angels in heaven. From those groups principality appear to be more powerful class and Christ is “far above” of all earthly or cosmic powers (Ephesians 1.21, 3.10) Believers will share His victory over hostile principalities.

Purim festival:- It is a Jewish festival celebrated in connection with the rescue of Jews from the oppression of Haman, during the time of Queen Esther. (Esther 9.21-32)

Q

Queen of Heaven:- A fertility goddess worshipped by the citizens of Jerusalem, during the idolatrous days, before the fall of Judah nation. The name of this goddess must have been “Ashtaroath”.

Qumran caves:- These Qumran caves are near the dead sea, where the Dead sea Scrolls were discovered by a Shepard boy Bedouin in 1947.

R

Rabbi/Rabboni:- It is a title of great respect. It means master or teacher. It was used by Nicodemus while addressing Jesus.

Rapture:- It is a doctrine held by some people which deals with the transformation of the redeemed into a glorified state at the second coming of Christ. The dead will be raised at Christ's return and given incorruptible body. They will be caught up into air along with living saints to meet the Lord. It is a reference to His second coming.

Red Dragon:- A name given for Satan after he was cast out of heaven. Then he turned his anger toward God's people. (Revelation 12.3-17)

Red Heifer:- An unblemished cow or ox that had never been yoked. It was used as a sacrifice in a sin offering (Numbers 19.1-9)

Regeneration:- New birth, spiritual change brought about by holy spirit in those who trust in Christ.

Rend-Tears:- To tear apart by force. Rendering one's cloths was a sign of great sorrow or repentance. (Esther 4.1)

Restitution:- To make a fair settlement with a person for property lost, or for wrong doing. This was strictly needed in Mosaic law. Zacchaeus promised to make four fold restitution of what he had taken unlawfully as a tax collection. (Luke 19.8)

Retribution:-

A repayment for wrong doing. Revelation of John:- The last book of the New Testament consists of a series of seven visions revealed directly by the Lord to apostle John with symbols such as angels, horsemen, plagueus. Those visions are considered by some eminent scholars that they picture the end of the present age and the coming of God's kingdom. These seven visions provide a proper outline of the book as – Christ encouraging of His church against attacks, Christ the Lamb with a sealed scroll. Seven Angels with blowing trumpets. Satan and the beast persecuting the church. Seven bowls pouring out the wrath of Christ. The judgement of Babylonia or Rome. The final victory of God and His judgement. The book of Revelation ends with final triumph with the promise of God for a new heaven and new earth.

Righteousness:- It is attributed to God only. It signifies Holiness, sinlessness and justice. God's righteousness can be granted to believers with faith in Christ.

Sabaoth:- A Hebrew word for “hosts”.

Sabbath:- The Jewish day of rest and worship. God established this after his six days creation (Genesis 2.1-3). The fourth commandment of God is about the observance of Sabbath and to keep it “Holy”. Jesus declared that Sabbath was made for man but not man was made for Sabbath. Saturday was the seventh day of the week for rest in the old Testament. Most of the Christians observe Sunday for worship because of Christ’s resurrection on the first day of the week. (1 Corinthians 16.2)

Sabbatical year:- Every seventh year or Sabbath year is sacred to the Lord. The land remained uncultivated and the debtors let free from their obligations.

Sabeans:- The native or inhabitants of ancient Sheba in south east Arabia were called so, that sheba land is now called yemen. Job’s livestock was stolen by sabeans. The wealthy Queen of Sheba travelled about one thousand miles to visit King Solomon.

Sacrament:- A religious act, which serves as a way for God’s grace. The Roman Catholics and most other orthodox churches observe only two of them. Baptism and Lords supper and even those are called ordinances only by many Evangelical groups.

Shame:- It is a noted confession of faith quoted by Faithful Jews each day. Here Israel, the Lord our God is one, Lord. (Deuteronomy 6.4-9)

Signet:- A royal seal used like a signature to legalize documents.

Sodomite:- A man who engaged sexually with another man.

Sojourner:- A man who lived temporarily in a foreign country. (Hebrew 1.1-9) Abraham sojourned in Egypt the Jews in captivity and exile. This word is also used symbolically for Christians in this word.

Sovereignty of God:- It is a theological phrase, which expresses the truth God is in full control of the universe that includes the creation of man and the world. His sovereign and supreme authority is also pointed out through His title “Almighty”. With His holy characters, the sovereign has every right to punish the sinner. But He graciously provided salvation to those who trust in Christ.

Spiritual Gifts:- Gifts bestowed upon believers by the holy spirit. Gifts listed in the book of Romans are preaching, teaching, serving, encouraging, giving, leading

and helping others. (Romans 12.6-8). Gifts listed in the 1 Corinthians are wisdom, faith, knowledge, healing, miracles, prophecy, interpretation of tongues. Love is the supreme spiritual gift.

Sychar:- A city of Samaria where Jesus spoke with a woman at Jacob's well.

T

Torah:- It is a Hebrew word which means "teaching" or instruction and used for the "Pentateuch" or the law of the first five books of the Old Testament or the law of Moses.

Trumpets Feast:- A Jewish religious Festival. It is also called seventh month festival. It was celebrated by them by blowing of trumpets. They continue that by reading the law and by presenting burnt offerings. Actually this is one of the seven festivals introduced by God to Israelites in their wilderness wanderings.

Tarsus:- Capital city of the Roman province of silica and the place where Paul was born. It was once important place of learning.

Tebeth:- The tenth month of Hebrew year.

Tiberias:- A city on the western shore of the sea of Galilee. It was built by the Herod Antipas and named after the Roman emperor Tiberias. The city Tiberius became a center of learning after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Titus:- A Greek Christian and travelling companion of Paul who was sent by the Apostle to check the problems in the church of Corinth Titus also served as a leader at the church of "Crete".

Tree of life:- A tree in the garden of Eden with fruits and if it is eaten it would bring eternal life. In the heavenly Jerusalem there will also be a tree of life with leaves for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22.2)

W

Word of God:- The revelation of God Himself to man primarily through Jesus Christ, and the Bible. The written scripture which Christian accept as the word of God testifies to Jesus as the eternal and the living word of God. (John 1.1-5)

Wilderness wondering:- The Aimless course taken by the Hebrew people, in the Sinai peninsula for forty years after they left Egypt. It is because of God's

punishment for their sin of disobedience. God provided food and guidance through Moses till they reached the promised land.

Writing:- The Hebrew probably learned writing from the Egyptians. Earliest writing was done on stones. Clay tablets, papyrus and animal skins.

X

Xerxus:- Is another name for Ahasuerus the Persian king husband of Queen Esther.

SOME NAMES OF GOD

Elohim : A Strong one creator, This word Elohim is repeated thirty one times in the first chapter of Genesis alone.

Elshedai : God of Mountain

Abba : Father

Jehovah Jah : A translation of jaweh. It is a Hebrew name

Jehovah Jireh : God will provide

Jehovah Nissi : The Lord is my banner

Jehovah Raah : A caring shepherd

Jehovah Raphe : I am the Lord who heals you

Jehovah Shalom : The Lord will give you peace

Jehovah Shammah : Name of a future new city called New Jerusalem, as versioned by prophet Ezekiel.

Jehovah Tsedkenna : This name is given to the future Messiah by prophet Jeremiah. Its Meaning is “the Lord our righteousness”

Shekinah : Glory of God

Rabbone : My great one

Yahweh : My Lord



Life is a function and thinking is functionary. People think or imagine so many things but they cannot put them into black and white, unless they are awarded with the gift of writing from the heavenly Father. God blessed me with that gift of writing and I started at the age of seventy. So far, I wrote six books and the theme of all those books is historical background of the bible, regarding the events and personalities.

I studied so many books on the Biblical History in America and excited to find new information. I wished to share what all I know with other Bible readers primarily with theological students, so that they can make use of it in future as the servants of God. In this connection, I would like to say, reading makes a full man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man.

May God bless all the readers

Yours in Christ

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